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The soldier of the cross

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The Rev<sup>d</sup>

Bro. C. Backus D.D.,

with the paternal regards  
of his friend

Bro. Leyburn,

Phil<sup>a</sup> Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> 1850.









THE  
SOLDIER OF THE CROSS;

A PRACTICAL

EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS VI. 10—18.

BY THE  
REV. JOHN LEYBURN, D. D.

“Fight the good Fight.”

NEW YORK:  
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,  
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Be  
strong in the

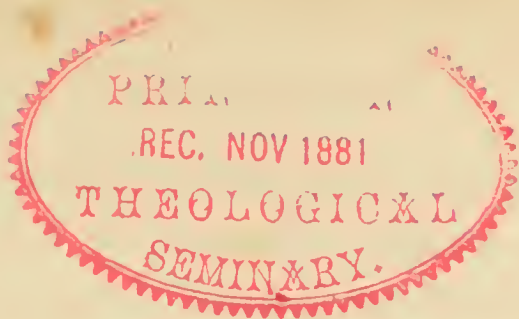
Lord, and in the power of his  
might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be  
able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle  
not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against  
powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,  
against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take  
unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to  
withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.  
Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,  
and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your  
feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;  
above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall  
be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.  
And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword  
of the Spirit, which is the word of God;  
praying always with all prayer and suppli-  
cation in the Spirit, and watching there-  
unto with all perseverance and  
supplication for all saints.

EPHESIANS VI.

10—18,







## ADVERTISEMENT.

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The greater part of the matter contained in this volume was originally written without any view to its publication. The senior member of the house by which it is now published, having seen the manuscript, thought it might make a useful volume if issued through the press; and at his suggestion the matter has been considerably modified, and also enlarged.

The plan of the work was adopted and to a great extent executed, before the author had consulted any other writer on this general topic. He has since referred to all works on the subject within his reach; but confesses himself chiefly indebted to the invaluable treatise of Gurnall.

This work is not designed as a learned or elaborate discussion. The object of the author has been to

present evangelical truth under scriptural imagery, and with a practical application to the common every-day life of the Christian. How far he has succeeded in this purpose, is for others to determine.

The author confesses his deep sense of the power of the press for disseminating truth and building up the Redeemer's kingdom in the world, and his earnest, and he trusts humble desire to be useful through this important agency. Should the present volume in any degree aid the people of God in their spiritual conflicts, or stimulate them to increased zeal in their warfare, or should it be instrumental in leading a single soul to enlist in the armies of salvation, he will feel that his desire has not been frustrated, and that his labour has not been in vain.

*Philadelphia: September, 1850.*



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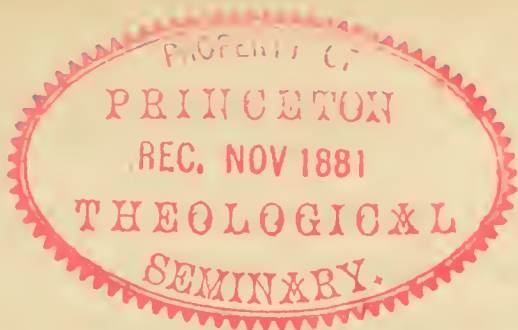
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# THE SOLDIER OF THE CROSS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ENEMY.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

THE Scriptures represent the Christian under both the images of a pilgrim and a soldier. He has a journey to make from the land of spiritual bondage, where by nature he is enslaved, through the wilderness of this world, to the heavenly Canaan. But in this pilgrimage dangers are to be encountered; enemies numerous, powerful, experienced and subtle, beset the way; and for this reason he is transformed

from a peaceful wayfaring man to a pilgrim warrior. Hence the sacred writers, in describing the duties and labours of the Christian, abound in martial imagery. He is called a "soldier," and furnished with "weapons of warfare" which "are not carnal but spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." He is urged to "war a good warfare," and as the closing scenes of life draw near, we hear him burst out in the joyful notes of the victor, as he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day." The church of God on earth is an army; its leader is the great "Captain of Salvation;" all believers are soldiers of the cross, and are ultimately brought "off more than conquerors through him that loved them."

The enemies with which the militant Christian is called to engage, though numerous and formidable, are but the common foes of our race, and there is no one who must not either enter the lists with them, and fight valiantly and win the day, or else be taken captive, and remain a prisoner in eternal chains and bondage. If disposed for the fight, rest assured you will be led to battle by a Captain whom victory never forsakes, and that, though the conflict may be

tedious and severe, though the day may oftentimes seem to be going against you, ultimate triumph is a matter of absolute certainty. More glorious far than the crusades of the middle ages, the mighty hosts of the army of salvation shall neither perish on their way to the scene of warfare, nor return from it with thinned and tattered ranks, pale and dispirited through failure of success, but shall enter at once the field of conflict, drive back Satan and his hellish crew, and possess in peace and undisputed security the holy, heavenly land. The ranks of the spiritual army are swelling and shall still swell as the sacramental host moves on. Recruits are called for now. Will you not join the glorious march? Come, put the gospel armour on.

In order that you may do so, it is important first to understand the nature of the warfare to which you are summoned; and hence you must be acquainted with the true character of the enemy,—you must discover the strength of the forces with which you are to contend.

“Put on,” says the apostle, “the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” The same inspired pen which has described the



armour has also here portrayed the enemy. The old adversary, the devil, with the various powers subject to him, wily and dangerous to souls, is surely not a foe to be despised. Powerful and fearful as are the onsets from hostile "flesh and blood," these seem to be almost forgotten or reckoned of small moment compared with this, the great adversary of all. "For," says he, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood."

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood!" We might think the apostle, in his zeal to disclose the power most to be dreaded, had almost overstepped his own meaning. Does he intend to teach that the soldier of Christ has no warfare with flesh and blood? Has he forgotten how the saints of God have been trodden under foot by the iron-shod opposer? how they have been "tortured, not accepting deliverance," or had "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment?" or how they have been stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword? or how they "wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented," and seeking their homes "in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves of the earth?" Well did Paul know that the blood of all the prophets which had been shed, from Abel to Zacharias, was upon the skirts of his people. Well did



Paul remember how Stephen had been stoned, and how his Master had been hung upon the tree, and well did he know that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." He had special reason, too, for himself to remember the jail, the stripes, the stocks, the chains which opposing "flesh and blood" had called him to endure. Or does he mean that there are within him no unsanctified passions, no remains of the old Adam? Has he forgotten that memorable portrait of a battle between the two natures which he has so strikingly drawn, and for which he was both the artist and the sitter for the picture? No other than himself was it, who, in describing his religious experience, says, "I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find, then, a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Here then, is an inward "warfare" between the "law

of sin" in the members, and "the law of the Lord" in the "mind." Here is a foe to be met, within the heart,—a traitor to be driven from the camp. No despicable things either are these heart enemies. Their name is almost legion. All that depravity which is so vile in the sight of a holy God, all that is to be dreaded as to its influence in destroying human souls, issues from the heart. "A cage of unclean birds," it is termed in Scripture. A dark and doleful den is it, from which come forth all manner of hideous and loathsome things. "For," says He who knows the heart, "out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these things come from within and defile the man." A formidable array, truly, is this. Where short of perdition could be met a more monstrous congregation of all that is wicked? "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," says Paul, to the churches of Galatia, when he announces the works of "the flesh," in language nearly allied to that in which his divine Master had written the catalogue of the evil dwellers of the heart. They "are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness,

revellings, and such like.” From the same source too, come unbelief, impenitence, sinful doubts and fears. Even the imperfections which beset us in the way of duty, and prevent oftentimes the proper exercise of Christian graces, have the same origin ; for not seldom is it, that what Christ said in the garden to his loving but wearied disciples, who, though faithful to their Master, “ could not watch one hour,” might be said to us, “ the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

This, then, is “ flesh and blood”—weak, frail, encumbering the spiritual nature at its best estate, and at its worst sending forth a band of dark and dreadful monsters—“ the fleshly lusts which war against the soul ;” and that these lusts do war against the soul even of the believer, appears not only from the conflict of the apostle of the Gentiles described by himself, but from similar teachings of the inspired saints, and is well known from experience to every true soldier in the army of salvation.

Here then, although we may have encountered but one of the wings of the enemy’s legions, and must go further to find him in strongest force, we discover that there are foes with which there must be fearful contests ; and that although the apostle might specially exhort us to seek the Christian armour, because of the wiles of the devil, he could by no

means have intended to teach that there was no warfare with flesh and blood, or that in that strife also this armour would not be indispensable.

The empire of Satan, however, is evidently regarded by the apostle as embracing in its broad limits all the evils we encounter from flesh and blood. Popularly, our spiritual enemies are "the world, the flesh, and the devil;" but inasmuch as the world and the flesh are to a very considerable extent under Satanic control, and constitute the agencies through which he operates, they are evidently here looked upon as a part of his devices, and he is set forth by the apostle as the representative of the entire forces with which the Christian must wage his warfare. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

The passage immediately succeeding is but an expansion, or explanation, of the idea of Satan's power just adverted to, and may convey to us some impression of the organized and formidable character of his spiritual forces. He does not carry on his war upon the saints at random, but under a well-devised system. There is an empire of which he is the ruler, and where the subjects occupy various gradations of rank. He is the "prince of the powers of the air;" under him are "principalities and powers," orders of beings of

whom we know little, but who are engaged in accomplishing the designs of their prince. There are also "the rulers of the darkness of this world," evil beings, whose deeds are darkness, and who have special charge over the lands of heathenism, where the dark places of the earth are filled with the habitations of cruelty; and "spiritual wickedness," or wicked spirits whose office it may be to tempt to the most malign and daring sins. The distinct work done by these various grades in the kingdom of Satan is not for us to know; enough is it, that we do know that they but carry out more systematically, extensively, and effectually, his dark and terrible designs, and make his "wiles" the more to be dreaded, and the necessity for a protective armour the more imperative.

One of the "wiles of the devil" is "to blind the minds" of men, "lest the light of the glory of God should shine into them."

That Satan has means of very direct access to the minds of men is unquestionable. He is not omnipresent, but by his emissaries, if not in person, he can be every where. "He walketh about." His means of traversing space are probably to us inconceivably rapid, and by his personal visitations, or through the various gradations of his servants, he can keep up a strict espionage over the entire human



family. Many, indeed, may be so fully established, and so rapidly progressing, in ways of wickedness, as to need but little of this care. Others, and especially God's people, it is important to haunt every where and always, to lead them, if possible, from the paths of righteousness. He cannot conquer the genuine believer, but he can harass and retard his onward march.

In the unregenerate Satan reigns supreme. The apostle represents him as "the spirit that ruleth in the children of disobedience." He has entered the temple of their bodies and there fixed his spiritual abode. He has taken command of all the legion of evil things which inhabit the soul, and got the control over the imagination, the will and the affections, and become the great actuating and governing power. The imagination thus at his disposal is inflamed and set on fire of hell, and all that is impure in thought can be made to stand before the vision of the mind in glowing, life-like reality. Thus are the passions kindled, and lust, covetousness, pride, and all evil feelings, brought into powerful exercise, and by this exercise endowed with new and greater strength. The pictures of the imagination also captivate the affections, and the soul falls in love with the forbidden things; and then the will purposes to pursue them, though heaven should frown, God denounce, con-



science upbraid, and salvation itself be periled. True, there is an infatuation; the vision is displayed in colours too glowing, and the dark and gloomy scenes of sorrow and remorse, which intervene between all scenes of sensual brightness, are kept out of sight; but in this consists the wiliness of the adversary, and on this in some measure depends his success. Deluded thus, how many are led captive by him at his will! How formidable his power to all! Truly we wrestle not with flesh and blood only, but with principalities and powers.

The turpitude and enormity of vice is often effectually concealed by the wiles of the devil. It has always been his way either to keep out of sight, as far as possible, the consequences of sin until the act be done, or so to garnish it over as to make it appear no sin at all. Ten thousand times you may have seen vice so covered over with the tinsel of wealth and fashion, so softened by fair names, rendered so common by its prevalence, and so genteel by the favour it has found, that its perpetrators have hardly looked upon it as vice at all. They have drunk down the pollution, and straightway "wiped their mouths, saying, I have done no wickedness."

Thus decked off and adopted into favour by those who give tone to fashionable society, is vice, think you, re-

garded as the same thing which is found amongst the vulgar and profligate, or less polished? Are the gay pleasures, which the rich enjoy amidst their sumptuous apartments, and the costly array of all that can charm the senses, placed in the same class with the indulgences of the more grossly and vulgarly licentious? Are they both reckoned as alike destroying a proper sense of spiritual and everlasting things, as successfully and fatally shutting God out of the heart, and for all eternity ruining the soul?

Under the disguise with which wealth and fashion can invest earthly pleasures, is there not in reality as much love of the world, devotion to sensuality, aversion to the things of God, and all the outgoings of a depraved heart, as in almost any other portion of that vast empire where Satan reigns? Amidst the splendid gayeties of the rich, the Omniscient eye doubtless sees what as really offends his purity and provokes his wrath as in the more disgusting vices of the poor. Still the fair name, the smile of fashion, and the enchantment of genteel pleasures, have in reality persuaded the devotee that in these pursuits there is neither great sin nor great danger, and herein is another of "the wiles of the devil."

As to the real tendencies and consequences of sin, how seldom are these so much as thought of in the moment of

temptation and indulgence! Poor, heedless, short-sighted creatures, how little do we dream, often, of the momentous results of some single act of transgression! We cannot see the future, nor know how the consequences of our misdoings will swell out in coming time; we cannot discern the long, dark, mournful train of sin and sorrow which one unwitting transgression lets in, nor would we often think of these things if we could. The bright phantom of sensual joy is before us; we are captivated, enchanted; we think not of the evil that must follow the indulgence; we do not wish to think of it; we do the deed, and then come the sorrow, shame, and remorse.

Our mother in Eden—think you that under the power of the first temptation, or the fruition of the first transgression, she could have had even a remote conception of the long train of sorrow, sin, and death, which from that act was to follow in all coming time, and to the latest posterity? She could not have known it all; she knew God had forbidden her eating that fruit, and this should have been enough; but in sight of the golden fruit so strongly prohibited, and inflamed with a desire for that knowledge of the gods for discerning good and evil, which this fruit could impart, carried away under the power of temptation, would she have allowed herself to think of the sorrow, sin, and

death to come, even if she could? The old serpent beguiled her, and she ate. Alas! the wiles of the devil! So also have her numerous descendants often looked upon the expected pleasure or profit, and forgotten the sin, sorrow, and curse, until the deed was done, and then the sin, sorrow, and curse all came.

In the matter of Uriah's wife, David was enticed by the lusting of the eye. His passions, once set on fire, put out the light of reason, and stifled the calls of conscience, and headlong into adultery he rushed. Then came the wretched plottings to conceal his sin; the husband already injured made drunk; then put in the forefront of a desperate battle, and murdered by his own matchless valour and faithfulness to his faithless king. Were these shameless plottings, these bloody hands, seen from the house-top where this series of crimes began? Alas! they were the dark afterpieces of the first bewitching vision. Such were the wiles of the devil.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE ENEMY.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

SURVEY still further the works of the great adversary. Another of his wiles consists in establishing among men false standards for determining the rectitude of their conduct. Whatever supremacy may be given in theory to the word of God as the rule of moral conduct, practically it is not allowed to occupy that exalted position in the world. For those who profess decided piety, and have avowedly adopted the revealed will of God as their rule of life, this standard may be regarded as well enough, but even such are often considered as over rigid, and the high requirements of the Scriptures are discarded as too far beyond the ordi-

nary attainments of mankind to be adapted to the general tone and practices of society. Some code more pliant, and falling in more naturally with the general propensities and habits of human nature, must be resorted to—something not so stringent and unreasonable as the Bible.

Hence is it, that many who would admit that their lives will not for one moment bear examination under the light of scriptural truth, are yet quite contented with the reflection, that according to the principles prevalent among men their characters cannot be adjudged unfavourably. They are as truthful, honest, observant of the common proprieties of life as most men, and this in a measure satisfies them.

Hence with little compunction they can practise deception in trade, live at enmity with their fellows, use the tongue of slander freely, pursue the gay pleasures of society, and, taking vengeance in their own hands, even, perhaps, destroy life itself according to the “code of honour,” because the world tolerates and applauds many of these practices. Getting the better in bargains, according to this standard of morals, is no longer theft; nor deception, falsehood; nor covetousness, idolatry; nor the lustful feeling or thought, adultery; nor inordinate anger, murder.

All departments of the world, indeed, in this respect



seem to have been imbued with the spirit of Satan's empire. The godless system of morality has pervaded every thing. Men who have set at defiance all the divine laws are rendered illustrious in the world's history. The same spirit is embodied in most fascinating features in works of fiction; it is the ruling spirit of much of poetic song; it has inwrought itself with the legislation of the world, and maintained so fully and universally its dominion, that it is not surprising that Satan, who is its author, should consider himself as of right possessing "the kingdoms of the world." If philosophy, history, fiction, poetry, legislation in the main, all the departments of the great world, are on the same moral platform with the individual transgressor of God's law, why should he regard himself as a sinner of high degree? May he not rather be satisfied that he is with the multitude, and thus lull conscience to rest? May not even the children of God fall under the influence of the all-prevailing principles of the world, until they lose the vitality and power of spiritual religion, and thus fall into these skilfully wrought "wiles of the devil?"

Nowhere, however, do Satan's devices appear more prominently than in the unreal importance with which he invests the things of the present life, as to their own intrinsic worth. The same kingdoms of the world which he proffered

to our Lord, eighteen hundred years ago, he has still held in reserve as a bait to ensnare the souls of men. These kingdoms, indeed, are not his own. He is permitted to exercise over them a limited authority, and pervert them for a season to his own purposes, but the title to them is still in the Most High, and in due season he will dethrone the usurper, and assert and maintain his own right.

The character of Satan as the arch-deceiver, appears most conspicuously in this delusion which he throws over human souls, as to the intrinsic importance of things temporal. He brings them under a spell which no mortal power can break; he creates an infatuation which bears them headlong onwards in the pursuit of the very objects which divine revelation and their own experience have pronounced vanity; and though this verdict is reiterated at every step, and their own disappointed hearts cry out in agony, "all is vanity," yet bewildered and deluded they still press on, "led captive by the devil at his will." Truly, madness is in their hearts while they live.

How readily the great adversary seizes upon things in themselves lawful, as instruments of deception and ruin! The general fact that the accumulation of this world's goods, in an honest calling, is an object approved by the word of God, is ground enough for him to occupy, that he

may use the pursuit of the world as a capital artifice to molest or destroy souls.

Let us, for a moment, follow the progress of his wiles in this respect. Here is the man of some reputable occupation, industrious, frugal, judicious, and slowly, but surely, prosperous. As yet he cannot be said to have fully imbibed the love of gold for itself, nor sold himself outright to the sordid thing. But he is succeeding beyond previous expectation, and with the increase of goods his desires enlarge, and he is now still more economical, absorbed with his business, and less disposed for deeds of charity. Heretofore the thought of being very rich scarcely occurred to him; success has now suggested the possibility of such a result; and he readjusts his schemes, becomes if possible even more industrious, frugal, keen in bargaining, and still more reluctant to part with his money. Indeed, frugality has grown into meanness, adroitness in trade to trickiness and fraud, and love of gold to downright avarice. To all intents and purposes, lucre is now his god.

True, he has not melted the gold in a crucible, forged it into an image, lighted before it his lamp, burned his incense, and prostrated himself in adoration; but the gold has the faculty of transmuting itself into houses, lands,

stocks, and all varieties of worldly goods, and then this hydra-headed monster which it has become, is the god adored; for though the knees are not bended to it, nor the smoking incense burned before it, yet the thoughts are there by day and night, through the week and on the Sabbath; and the affections of the heart are so there, that for it no labour is too great, no sacrifice too dear,—friends, home, health, almost life itself are freely laid on the shrine. Is not this man an idolater? is not Mammon his deity? As surely as is the poor Pagan, who in his blindness bows down to stocks and stones, or beasts and birds, or to the magnificent array of the firmament above, an idolater, just so surely is this man of Christian lands an idolater too. His temple is the mart of business; his deity the great Mammon; his incense the sincere, fervent love of his inmost heart, and the frequent, extreme adulation of honest lips; and his prostrations are the unceasing toils of every energy of both mind and body through almost every moment of his life. Were the “god of this world” seeking for a devoted worshipper to whom he could point as a pattern and stimulus to others, could he ask for an illustration of adoration more entire, of service more complete?

Full well does Satan know that “the friendship of the world is enmity against God;” that “if any man love the

world, the love of the Father is not in him ;” that no man can serve both God and Mammon, and that as he has effectually succeeded in enshrining Mammon in the sanctuary of the soul, just as effectually must he have succeeded in shutting God out of it. Then, too, his faithful servant is so well satisfied with this god of gold, admires so much its beautiful proportions, the nature of the services to be rendered, and the rich rewards promised, that he would have no other to reign over him. The infatuation is complete. The snare has not been laid in vain. He has been caught in the toils. He gives his immortal interests up and makes this god his all.

You might also go into other departments of the world and see how in the same manner the god of this world has beguiled some into the pursuit of human fame and station ; how for this they sacrifice almost every earthly good, and make ambition the idol in their souls ; or how others exhaust the giddy rounds of pleasure and sensual joy, crying, “ who will show us any good ? ” and bringing all their strength, and treasure, and heart’s affections, into the “ broad road ” where, in the train of revelry and sensual joy, the multitude march in vast procession to the second death. The unnumbered myriads who have already perished from their mad infatuation in pursuing these empty and forbidden



things ; the vast multitudes over whom the world now holds its unbroken spell, and the strong, constant, and extensive influence these things exert in retarding the progress and crippling the energies even of the soldiers of the cross, show how capital a device "the world" has furnished Satan, how much to be dreaded and warred against in these particulars are the wiles of the devil, and how true it is that our warfare is not simply with flesh and blood, but with principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

The more prominent devices of Satan will now have been brought to your attention, when you have also observed how he destroys the susceptibilities of the soul to the true importance of eternal things. To many of the truths which have to do with the world beyond the grave, he gives a flat denial. As he said to the woman in Eden, so he says to many who are halting on the threshold of some new transgression for fear of the threatened retribution, "Ye shall not surely die." Fear not to sin, indulge your heart's desires, eat, drink, and be merry, go the whole round of the world's follies, ye shall not surely die.

Is it not thus that men have been made infidels and atheists ? They are not such at the outset, at least by any logical conviction ; they are made such by the determina-



tion to indulge their lusts,—to live without God, and then by the lies of Satan, who whispers that their fears of retribution for such sins are idle follies.

Their native corruptions have called for indulgences on which God had laid his prohibitory mandate, and against which he has declared eternal vengeance. Satan has urged them to satisfy these cravings of corruption, laughed at their fears of threatened vengeance, and they have committed the iniquity, and then echoing the words of the arch deceiver, have declared that such fears were but the dreams of the weak and superstitious; that there is no hell, that there is no God, or if there be, the Bible did not come from him. Evangelical religion, with its spiritual self-denying doctrines, is scouted; the blessed cross of Jesus is a stumbling-block and foolishness, and the Church, an assemblage of enthusiasts and hypocrites.

Satan has here done his work, and done it thoroughly. True, conscience may sometimes unsettle these sandy foundations, but Satan has also potent drugs with which to lull conscience to profound repose. What then if the truths of God do come to such a man? what if the wrath of God is denounced against all transgressors? what if the mercy of God is set forth at the cross? what if a blessed eternity of purity and peace is promised to all who follow the footsteps

of the meek and lowly Saviour? Not one of all these truths affects him, for he is an unbeliever. "Satan hath blinded his mind, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto him."

But even where men are not plunged into the dark abyss of infidelity, does there not prevail amongst them a fearful insensibility to everlasting things? Do they not seem to be under a strong delusion as to the reality of death, judgment, heaven and hell, and all the momentous interests of their immortality? so that although told that they are dead in trespasses and sins, under condemnation already, just awaiting the sentence of eternal wrath, and pointed to the only remedy by which they can be rescued from the penalty and quickened into life,—they will but say, This is all true, and we ought to seek the remedy at once; and then turn straightway to their farms, or merchandize, or pleasures again. Is there not a strange infatuation here? Has not the God of this world blinded their minds? Alas! "the wiles of the devil!"

Even the children of God fall under this powerful faculty of Satan for destroying the impressions of the importance of eternal things. He cannot, indeed, so utterly shut out a sense of everlasting realities, as in the case of the poor infatuated worldlings, but he can still so war against their

most accurate and absorbing impressions of eternal things, as greatly to weaken the power of these momentous realities in their spiritual lives and conduct. Occasional pantings after more of the knowledge of God and of the spirit of Christ, dissatisfaction with former attainments, repentings over past short-comings, and resolutions after new obedience do indeed arise in the bosoms of the children of the kingdom. Feeling the claims of covenant obligations, of a Saviour crucified, and of a world perishing in sin, they sigh after more of the mind that was in Him who went about doing good; they read of the zeal of a Paul, Whitefield, McCheyne, Harlan Page, Hannah More, or Lady Colquhoun; and long to be baptized with the same spirit, and for a time do seem to be reaching after a higher state of usefulness and piety; but it is too often only for a time. Satan whispers that there is such a thing as being zealous overmuch, or that the great mass of Christians seem to be doing no more than they themselves have been wont to do; that Paul, Whitefield, and such like, were remarkable persons, whose characters are not to be the standard for ordinary believers; that any effort to imitate such piety and usefulness would seem singular and occasion remark, and that at any rate their position and talents would enable them to accomplish but little;—and hence their better

thoughts and resolutions are suppressed, and to their former low, sluggish, formal standard do they sink again, ensnared by these wiles of the devil.

And though Satan cannot extort from the believer a flat denial of the great truths of God's word, he can yet suggest the most painful doubts, and overcloud his spirit with at least some of the murky vapors from the world of atheism. Oftentimes may the Christian be tempted to question the consistency of certain doctrines of the Bible, or to murmur at the providences of God. And though he will not deny the great truths of the gospel, he may be led to deny for a time his own interest in them, and thus remain shut up in gloomy despair, cheerless in his own heart and unprofitable in the church. Terrified and despairing before the "roaring lion," or allured and deceived by the assumed form of "the angel of light," he is too often in a measure overcome, fails to tread Satan under foot as he should do, and is hindered in his heavenward march.

The Romans were accustomed to call the baggage with which their army was incumbered "impedimenta," *hindrances*, because the transportation of this baggage retarded their progress; so, although the evil one cannot destroy the soldier of the army of salvation, he can annoy him, and cast about him so many discouragements as greatly to cripple his

energies and impede his upward progress. These toils of the devil are the “impedimenta” of the spiritual hosts, by which the believer is led to halt, to turn aside from his onward course, to slumber at his post, and give way to discouragements, until he is far from accomplishing the high attainments which were within his reach, and at last is called away from the scene of his warfare with many of his glorious aspirations unfulfilled, with sad regrets over so much of the work of life to be left undone. Alas! the wiles of the devil! Truly our warfare is not with flesh and blood alone, but with principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness,—may we not say—even in heavenly places.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE EVIL DAY OF THE CONFLICT.

“That ye may be able to stand in the evil day.”

It would be doing injustice to those who are called to be soldiers of Christ, and to the cause itself, not specially to notice the seasons of trial to which the Christian warrior may be exposed,—the occasions in which the power of the enemy must be experienced. A skilful soldier will endeavour to make himself acquainted in advance with his fields of expected conflict; to learn where the enemy will most probably make his assaults, and under what circumstances he must prepare for the most desperate and deadly struggles. A man of war is the Christian soldier, and that from the outset. No sooner has he girded on the harness than the tocsin calls him to arms; and so frequent and numerous are these calls that before he at last lays aside his armour he will have been the hero of far more than a thousand battle-fields. These



seasons of conflict are his times of greatest trial, and hence the apostle has designated them by the term "evil day."

In the widest acceptance of this term, the entire life of the believer is an evil day. Never is he entirely free from the body of death; never does Satan altogether suspend his dangerous and distressing wiles. The remains of corruption still cling to the soul even amidst its highest attainments, and in the most advanced stages of the spiritual life; and faith is never so strong, nor zeal nor love so great that there is no longer reason for dissatisfaction with self and all its works. As long as there is within the soul that which reminds us of the hole of the pit whence we were digged; as long as we are still compelled to say, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief," even though our hope be steadfast, and our joys abound, it will, it must be to the child of God an evil day. His great desire is to get the victory over the last of his lusts,—to be free from sin. He earnestly yearns after sweeter communion with his Lord, for complete deliverance and perfect sanctification, and

"Longs for evening to undress,  
That he may rest with God."

"Few and evil," said the patriarch, "have been the days of my pilgrimage," and yet that pilgrimage had been

signally marked by the divine favour, and by his personal fidelity and devotion. But it had been a pilgrimage through the wilderness of a sinful world. Often had the patriarch trodden his solitary way with weary foot and heavy heart; often had he thought of the end of the journey, of the crossing of the stream, of the rest beyond, where the weary feet and heavy heart would be known and felt no more. The candidate for the inheritance of the saints cannot but regard, in some sense, the period which keeps him from that "land of pure delight" as an evil time. How can he who loathes sin, mourns over imperfections, pants for perfect holiness, feel otherwise than that the day which keeps him in contact with sins and infirmities is an "evil day?"

There are, however, seasons of special trial occurring all along the march of the pilgrim soldier, which he may peculiarly regard as to him the "evil day." Amongst these you will doubtless recognise times of spiritual despondency. All believers are subject to more or less of fluctuation in their religious experience. With all there is more or less of both sunshine and clouds in the spiritual firmament; but the clouds predominate much more over the sunshine with some than with others. Constitutional differences give tone to religious character. Those of a

joyful sanguine temperament most frequently make happy Christians, whilst the naturally timid and desponding carry the spirit of fearfulness and sadness into their religion. Long experience in the Christian life may render such seasons of despondency less frequent and distressing even with those whose constitutional tendencies are most strongly in that direction; but more or less of spiritual depression belongs to all, at some stage of their course.

To the young and inexperienced believer, such seasons are at times painful beyond all expression. The visions of the spiritual world had burst on him whilst sitting on the very borders of despair, and he had welcomed the entrancing prospects of a bright and joyful pilgrimage to a bright and heavenly home. He was translated from darkness to light; he was ransomed from bondage; he had a new song put into his mouth, his feet set upon the rock of ages, and he had a good hope through grace of everlasting life. He was filled with wonder and surprise, and amazed that he could have so long refused such divine blessings. Heaven seemed begun on earth, begun in his own soul. He thought it would always be thus. Sad mistake!

Soon the tempter, who had seemed to have been smitten with a deadly blow, shows that he has not been altogether conquered. Former appetites and passions again crave

indulgence. Evil thoughts enter the mind and mingle with the most sacred employments. The heavenly joys are departed, the sweet communings of the closet gone, and the sanctuary affords but little comfort. This state of things is new and unexpected; the inexperienced saint understands not the meaning of the change, and is alarmed. Then comes the tempter, saying, All this late experience was a mistake, you never have been converted; no Christian could feel as you do; it is useless for you to profess what you do not possess,—it is worse, it is base hypocrisy. Abandon then your praying, Bible-reading, and religious profession, and seem to be no more than in reality you are. Then comes the season of bitter anguish, often of deep despair. The poor, joyless, disconsolate, bewildered, broken-hearted disciple knows not whither he shall flee. “O that I had the wings of a dove! then would I fly away, and be at rest.” “I sink in deep waters where there is no standing.” “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” To him this is an “evil day.”

Other seasons occur throughout the spiritual life, when the old Adam seems to have been aroused to his utmost, and when Satan assaults us with almost resistless power. Passions, which we hoped had been subdued, awake as if

only refreshed from their slumbers, and cry for indulgence with a clamour, fierceness, and pertinacity, absolutely appalling. A mighty conflict ensues, and deadly are the hostile forces. Happy the soldier who stands in this evil day.

A time of spiritual declension and worldliness in the Church may also be regarded as an "evil day." The spirit of piety in the Church is always far below the proper standard, but there are times when it sinks even much lower than the ordinary level. How often did the God of Israel chide and chasten his ancient people for their rebellion, disobedience, idolatry, and ingratitude; and the Church now, unhappily, too much resembles that of the former and the darker dispensation.

There is a winter season in Zion as well as in the natural world, and these winters are sometimes long and dreary. Few flowers and fruits are seen, few days of sunshine; a universal torpor prevails, and under the chilling blasts even the soldiers of the cross are found sleeping at their posts; the army of salvation seems almost frozen in its onward march. Within the doors of the heart, in the meantime, false fires are lighted, strange guests are invited, and sin, Satan, and the world, hold their festivals. The prophets prophesy to a disobedient and gainsaying people, the solemn assemblies are forsaken, objects of benevolence



and piety languish, few enlist as recruits in the spiritual hosts, and the warfare with the great enemy is feebly sustained. Such seasons of spiritual declension are sometimes general over a whole country, and throughout all branches of the Church, so that for years but little impression is made on the kingdom of darkness, and large ingatherings of souls are scarcely heard of.

Now to maintain a high state of spirituality, and an active Christian life, is under any circumstances arduous ; but when all without and around us is so inauspicious, how much more difficult to breathe the spirit and bring forth the fruits of an humble, fervent piety ! There is a contagion in the circumstances which surround the individual believer. He sees his own downward tendencies and bewails his unfaithfulness ; he remembers the peace and joy which attend a course of humble devotion, and his heart feebly purposes to pursue the “ more excellent way,” which his better judgment and conscience approve, but everywhere he encounters the strong current of worldliness and formality, his better thoughts forsake him, and he falls in with the downward tide.

“ While men thus slept ” it was that “ the enemy came and sowed tares.” The children of the kingdom slumber at their posts, but their enemy knows no sleep nor weariness.

ness. For him no season is more propitious than one of general spiritual deelenion in the Church. Principles and practices, which in more auspicious times would have found no favor with professing Christians, are now tolerated and indulged in. Worldly amusements turn aside the pilgrim soldiers from the self-denials and hardships of the camp; strict discipline is unpopular and uncommon, and great laxity of Christian morals and practice prevail. Such seasons are also the harvest times for religious speculation and false philosophy. Simple gospel truth is regarded as somewhat obsolete, and not up to the advanced intelligence of the times; and as men must have something to interest them in the department of religion, they demand more novel themes from the pulpit, little scrupulous as to their character, and are lost in admiration of the subtle, ingenious, self-styled philosopher, who strikes out some path which he and they may deem new, but which the more humble and better informed know was discovered and renounced long before these neophytes were born. Could you but penetrate to the more retired life of individual Christians at such times, how sad a tale would be told; how rare wrestlings of the closet, self-examination, faithful searchings of the Scriptures,—how weak the faith,

“How low the hope of joys above,  
How few affections there.”

Truly, this is an evil day.

More evil still than this, however, is the day, when the believer actually backslides, and falls into open sin. In the great spiritual warfare between the soldiers of light and darkness, as in the struggles of other armies, there may be occasions when, to human observation, the event of the day seems doubtful,—when the hitherto victorious forces are apparently not only checked in their career, but actually driven back for a time. Sad seasons of discomfiture have occurred to every soldier of the cross, extremely sad to some. The supineness and lethargy of a state of spiritual declension has not been unobserved by the wily adversary; and what better opportunity can there be for some masterly stroke upon the kingdom of light? How propitious the period for entrapping some of the friends of Zion into the commission of a glaring act of transgression! Thus was the “man after God’s own heart” ensnared; and thus also, if not in time of spiritual declension, at least in time of self-confidence and spiritual pride, fell the man who had said, “though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I.” You may not, reader, fall into David’s or Peter’s sin, but if living in sloth and carnal

security, you know not how soon Satan may be upon you, and taking you unawares, may entrap you into some enormous transgression. Then how will the light of your Heavenly Father's countenance be withdrawn; how will self-reproach, shame, and remorse fill your desolate bosom; how will your Saviour be wounded in the house of his friends; how will your memory be furnished with food for lasting sorrow!—what an evil day will that be!

A time of absence from your home, or of changing your place of abode, may also prove “an evil day.” We are much more the creatures of circumstances, even in our religion, than most of us are wont to believe. On making a public profession of religion, we virtually announce to those around us that we are henceforth to be regarded as the followers of Christ,—that from this time they must not look for us amongst the multitude who do evil, but expect us to act according to the acknowledged regimen of consistent church members; and a systematic arrangement for a corresponding public and private life are at the same time adopted. Henceforth, as far as this outward position is concerned, the circumstances remaining the same, there is little difficulty to be encountered. Indeed, the difficulties are the other way, for men would now wonder

much more to see you practically deny your profession than act in accordance with it.

Suppose, however, these circumstances should be changed, either temporarily or permanently, and this professed soldier of Christ be thrown out of his usual associations. His new acquaintances do not know him to be a Christian. He persuades himself that there is no necessity for announcing this fact as yet, and acquaintances are formed and cultivated in an ever-widening circle, not one of whom look upon him as anything more than a worldling. In the meantime he is losing his interest in the duties and privileges of the children of the kingdom; not being recognised as professedly such, there is little restraint upon his conduct; and the sacramental table being neglected, so also soon is the closet, and the sanctuary itself is irregularly attended, and the Sabbath anything else than kept holy. A sad decline indeed is this, reader; worse than sad thus to deny your Master before men. If such has been your history, you have for the time concealed and failed to use your panoply, you have repudiated your connection with the armies of light, and have ostensibly enrolled yourself with the enemy. How many such are found amongst the emigrants to the newer portions of our land. Church-members they had been in their former homes,—perhaps not inactive mem-



bers; church-members they are not now. How many thus also deny their Lord in temporary journeyings from the place of their customary abode and church-going,—during a summer's relaxation it may be, at a public watering-place, where worldliness musters so strongly, and men to stand up for the gospel and the Christian life are so much needed; or in wanderings through foreign lands, where, though almost alone, and a mere wayfaring man, something might be done to leave an impression on the strong holds of sin and Satan there! Has it been thus with you? An evil day truly then was that.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE EVIL DAY OF THE CONFLICT.

“That ye may be able to stand in the evil day.”

NOR in vain is the Christian forewarned of an enemy and provided with an armor. He becomes personally acquainted with this enemy, and that right speedily. His is no holiday soldiership. He is not furnished with an imposing military vesture simply that he may join the pageantry of festival occasions, and spend all his life far away from the hardships of the camp, and the tumult and danger of the battle-field. You have already been shown some of the scenes of the conflict where the warrior is contending in the evil day, but still others remain which must not pass unobserved.

Turn next, then, to the survey of the “evil day” when false doctrine prevails.

Times there are, however, in the church, when many will “not endure sound doctrine;” such times there have always been since the days of our Lord and his apostles; such times to some extent are these in which we live. “Having itching ears,” have not many fulfilled the description of the apostle, and “heaped to themselves teachers,” and “turned away their ears from the truth, and turned unto fables?” Have not some, at least, become weary of the old and beaten track in theology, and sought for new and more attractive ways of setting forth things divine? The time has been when the highest achievement of a human mind was to grasp abstruse and difficult subjects of thought, and make them so clear and palpable as to fall within the easy comprehension even of the most unlearned; we are not certain that with some in our day, to take the simplest truths and clothe them in such mystery that neither he who writes nor they who read can comprehend them, is not regarded as altogether the highest intellectual estate—the loftiest achievement of genius. Either old truths or positive errors are dressed up by hard labour in an unintelligible diction, and then the author looks upon himself as a prodigy of a philosopher, in the lead even of “the advanced party” in the forces of the so-called reform, and not a few are there to echo his swelling words, and tread in his erratic footsteps.

Thus have the very fundamentals of the spiritual kingdom been assailed.

Those there have been, also, who, having turned away from sound doctrine, and given heed to "endless genealogies," have seemed to count it of much more consequence that a man be found in connection with an outward "succession," than that he cherish in his heart, and show forth in his life, the graces of the gospel; who have turned away attention from Christ to mere ordinances, from "the cross in the heart to that on the house-top," from seeking after the bread of life, whereon to feed and live, to "looking for the Church." Nor have the advocates of such sentiments been idle. Skilfully, vigorously, and perseveringly have they waged their warfare against evangelical truth, and but too successful has that warfare been. How many who once sat under the teachings of men who faithfully and fully expounded the whole counsel of God, have now taken to themselves itching ears, and refused longer to endure sound doctrine, and turned unto fables; and will, it is to be feared, make dreadful shipwreck of themselves, and bear others with them as they are dashed on the dark and desolate strands of "some other gospel." Such are the times which try men's souls,—the times when you are called upon to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to

the saints," to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good,—such we may well call an "evil day."

We must not omit, however, to turn our attention also to the evil day of rebuke and persecution.

Such days are not now, perhaps, for you, reader, but you may yet be called to see them. Satan seems at present to have chosen the opposite method of assault upon the Church. He has allowed his friends to speak well of religion, to become ostensibly its admirers, even to enlist nominally under its banner. He has persuaded the armies of salvation that the most effectual mode of pushing forward their conquests is to relax their terms of admission, to soften their rigid discipline, and cultivate amicable relations with the hostile world, by adopting its policy, and compromising with its claims—by resorting to such pomp and glare as is attractive to the unregenerate, and by giving an easy license to sensual pleasures.

Still the time has been—and that time will come again—when the friends of Zion, having stood firm and unflinching for the truth, and refused to yield one iota to Satan, and made fierce war upon his hosts, have been forced to pass, in return, through a baptism of fire and of blood; "principalities and powers" have been leagued against them, and drawn the sword, prepared



the dungeons, and lighted the fires, for the making of martyrs. And sadly have the hosts of the Lord suffered in such evil days. Their bones have lain thick on Alpine snows, their blood has run like water on the plains of France, their flesh has been roasted in Smithfield's fires, and the "little flock," terrified and stricken, has sought refuge in the valleys and caves of Scotland, or fled across a wild ocean to find a refuge in the western wilderness.

Such evil days, indeed, have not now entirely passed away, for as evangelical religion revives in the dominions of that scarlet mother of abominations, who has so often made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, and within her borders, here and there, recruits are enlisted under the banner of the Lord, she again shows herself ready to do her horrid deeds of wickedness, and the poor friendless Portuguese are driven from their burning, wasted cottages, and a man of God is locked up in the dungeons of the Inquisition for circulating the Bible. The day may come when even here Satan will betake himself to these old methods of assault, and when either you or your children may be called to testify the sincerity of your devotion by the death of the martyr.

But even if such evil days as these come not to try the sincerity of your faith, there may be other and lesser, but

still formidable trials of the same general nature. At the outset of your espousals to Christ you may encounter opposition from those of your own household. A husband or a father unregenerate, may not wish to see you forsaking them for the Saviour. Hating true piety, they may scorn to have it within their dwellings. Bitter words of contempt and rebuke may fall upon your faltering spirit, and in coming out to join the soldiers of the cross, you may be obliged to count the cost by taking into the estimate the sacrifice of cherished friendships and dearest earthly ties. Rare are such trials now, but they are not unknown; and to all who meet them, though they may read with sweet and sacred joy, "blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake," yet to some extent such must be "evil days."

You have just been told of evil days such as you may not have seen: let us now look at others, of which you may have already seen something, and may yet know more—I mean the evil days of affliction. To call the seasons when God lays his chastening hand upon us evil days, as we are well aware, may seem almost an aspersion of the benign and merciful aspect in which the gospel presents such providences. Still, whatever of mercy may attend them, and however peaceful their ultimate fruits, they are at the time

sore trials to flesh and blood. We have divine authority for saying, that “for the present they are not joyous, but grievous;” and we know that but for our partnership with Satan and sin such sorrows never would have been ours. They are the remnants of the curse which a kind and Heavenly Father in the end transforms to blessings, but which in themselves bear about them the bitterness of the curse still.

Job was an eminent illustration of what a saint should be—so full of faith, love and works of charity, that even the great adversary seemed to have despaired of making an impression on him, and declared that “God had set an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he had on every side.” Yet God gave Satan leave to exhaust his wiles upon this faithful servant, sweeping away at once his earthly riches and his household treasures,—leaving him poor, childless, dishonoured, and smitten down by painful bodily ills, until he seemed to have drained the last dregs of the bitter cup of affliction. How far Satan still has power over the fountains of human trouble, to open them at his pleasure, even for the children of the kingdom, is not for us to know; but certain it is that, sooner or later, all God’s people do suffer either a part or all the ills which troubled Job, and that such trials occasion sore temptations

to the sins of discontent and rebellion, and thus become accessory, to some extent, to the designs of the great tempter. Have you not tasted for yourself the bitterness of affliction, and when taking down the draught felt the uprisings of your heart against the hand of that Providence by whom it was prepared, and wrestled hard in endeavouring to quiet these inward murmurings? Was there no disposition to think hard of God, and say, "Why hast thou thus afflicted me?" and to question his right to tear away your loved ones?

You once had an abundance of this world's goods, perhaps, and they are now all gone. You had a home you could call your own, a well-spread board, and no carefulness for the wants of the morrow, and not only plenty but profusion. But things have changed, and the home of your own, and the well-spread table, and the plenty, are all gone, and poverty, anxiety for the morrow, and it may be actual want, have come. Or in your household was a little prattler, the sweetest, brightest star in all that quiet firmament, but that sweet, bright star has passed away from those skies for ever. Or the husband to whom you gave your early love, and on whom you leaned as your earthly helper from your gay bridal hour through many a day of sunshine and of sadness, is here for you to lean upon no more, and you have

been left a lonely widow; or the sparkling eye, crimson cheek, full muscle, firm step, and cheerful spirit, have departed, and in their place have come paleness, weakness, pains, and sadness of heart. True, afflicted one, there are consolations for you. The balm of Gilead can ultimately heal all these wounds; but after all you are a poor weak worm,—you are human nature, and still have its infirmities; and when with the faintings of the heart, and the sufferings of the flesh, come also the strong struggles to keep down the murmuring rebellious spirit, how can you but feel, that whatever they may work out hereafter, for the present such must be evil days?

Last of all, may we not regard the day of death as in some aspects an evil day? Be not hasty, dear reader, to dispute this intimation. Well do we know, as will be shown elsewhere, how this last enemy can be conquered by the soldiers of salvation. We are looking now at death in its physical relations, and in those very features which render a power and grace divine indispensable in order to victory. No soldier of Christ will fail to come off conqueror in the struggle with this last mortal foe, but death will nevertheless show himself to be still at heart a foe. Faith may enable us to almost forget all this side of heaven, and thus disregard the approach of the noiseless spirit of the scythe



and glass, and so much long for the sweet fields beyond the flood as to welcome him as a messenger of joyful release; but still how often does frail human nature think with timid dread of that last trying hour. How often does even the eminent saint suffer the passing fear, lest when the conflict comes it may be too much for him. How does he heave the sigh of sadness when he remembers that he passes through death as a sharer of the curse—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." How often do even the children of the kingdom march along with drooping head and downcast spirit, all their lifetime "in bondage through fear of death." Think you not to such, then, death must also seem an evil day?

## CHAPTER V.

## THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”

IN view of the conflicts and dangers which await the Christian soldier, he is provided with a panoply, or complete suit of armour. Like the men of war who entered the battle-field clad in mail, so is he sent forth with helmet, breastplate, shield, sandals, girdle, and sword, that he may “fight the good fight of faith,” “stand in the evil day,” and at last come off more than conqueror.

The various parts of the panoply specified by the apostle are those of the Grecian armour, with which, of course, the Ephesians were familiar, and to whose minds this martial imagery must have been striking and instructive. Let us follow the order of the apostle, and in examining the armour of the Christian soldier, fix our attention first on  
THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

Among the orientals, as you are aware, the girdle is an almost universal article of dress in both civil and military life. In the former case it is not only ornamental, but serves to confine the loose and flowing vesture of the East; whilst in the latter it performs the additional office of supporting and bracing the body, better to endure toil and fatigue—of binding together the various parts of the armour, and also furnishing a receptacle for weapons. Hence the girdle is not only an important part of the panoply, but to some extent indispensable to the efficiency of the whole.

These ancient girdles when chiefly ornamental were of rich and costly cloths, and when used for military purposes were of thick leather; but that with which you are called to be girded as a Christian soldier, is of a material far more enduring and becoming than these; it is formed of truth itself. As “righteousness was to be the girdle of Christ’s loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins,” so truth is to be the girdle of his followers.

The term *truth* here, is not intended, as might be supposed, to designate the general system of doctrine embraced in the word of God,—this, as you will see, being included under other parts of the panoply. You are here to understand truth as meaning *sincerity*. The soldier of the cross is to be free from guile, hypocrisy, and all deception; to be

frank, single-hearted, sincere; and this spirit must so pervade your whole character that you may be said to be encircled by it,—to wear a “girdle of truth.”

Truth is absolutely indispensable to any proper enlisting in the cause of Christ. A treacherous spirit cannot for one moment be tolerated in the armies of salvation.

Not a few, indeed, from the earliest ages have ostensibly enlisted in the Christian warfare, been registered on its rolls, worn its outward vestments, and been mustered under its banners, who at heart have had no sympathy in the great objects of its battles.

Some such have been brought hither by personal and sinister ends, and only desire the success of the Christian hosts so far as this will tend to securing their selfish purposes. They had suffered, perhaps, the ruin of reputation; by their misdeeds they had lost caste in society; they had reduced themselves to a condition both uncomfortable and unprofitable; and as those who are enrolled as the friends of Christ are usually looked upon as upright and sincere, they take upon themselves the Christian profession, as apparently the most easy and effectual method of wiping from their characters infamy and disgrace. Few can be found, you may declare, amongst the professed soldiers of Christ, who are so base,—but are there none?

Others, with a spirit also despicable, may professedly espouse this blessed cause for the sake of securing the favour and patronage of their associates in the church. Believing that brethren in the same cause will prefer to patronize each other, they hope by this means to come in for the world's gain which may thus be gotten. Of the same general class are they with those who followed the Master when on earth for the sake of the "loaves and fishes;" who, reversing the truth that "godliness is gain," endeavour to make gain the sum and substance of their godliness. Hence their show of piety increases with the advance of their worldly business from the patronage of the church; and hence, when the church withholds its lucrative favour and bestows it elsewhere, they complain of neglect, seem disheartened, and perhaps betake themselves to the world ostensibly as they always have done in reality. All such are wolves in sheep's clothing; they have prostituted the Christian profession; they have come profanely to the Lord's table; they are worshippers of Mammon and not of God, and have brought their money-tables into his sacred temple; they are traitors in the camp, and wear about them the girdle of hypocrisy. Do you say there must be few such in the hosts of the army militant? Are there not some?



You will also admit that there must be the same absence of sincerity, where, although the truth is ostensibly received, it is yet so combined and covered over with error as to be dishonoured and almost totally shut out of sight. Are there not many called by the name of Jesus, and professing to be zealously enlisted in his cause, who are still giving that honour to creatures which belongs to him alone? Have they not exalted to divine eminence creature intercessors? Have they not given to angels, departed saints, and living men, the homage which belongs exclusively to the Son of God? Are they not so mantled in error that the truth is shut out from their minds? Such men have placed their faith in ceremonies, sacraments, and traditions; they have denied to the true followers of the Lamb any part or lot with his people,—have cast out their name as evil, and exhausted both invective and earthly power in wearing out the saints of the Most High. Such men may, indeed, belong professedly to the army of the militant church, and call themselves by its leader's name, and assume to be the only true and faithful soldiery; but warring as they do against the soldiers, the Master, and the common glorious cause, what are they but enemies in disguise?—they wear not the girdle of truth.

May I not further designate as belonging to the same

general class those who, although numbered in the ranks of the visible church, are yet devoting their energies and affections to the inordinate pursuit of this present world? Not a few such are there, probably, even in the most evangelical branches of Zion. They may be quite reputable in their church-standing, for inasmuch as the love of the world may exist in entire consistency with a formal profession, the error here involved is more subtle, more difficult of detection, more prevalent, and more dangerous than almost any other.

How often do even the professed followers of Christ seem to forget that his claims have any connection whatever with their worldly employments. How little is it remembered, that though worldly occupations may be in themselves lawful, and their diligent pursuit commendable, yet to set the heart upon them, and devote the supreme energies of life to them, certainly prostitutes that which might have been for good to what is lamentably evil, excludes God from his rightful supremacy, and introduces even into the church a race of idolaters.

Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also; and where the treasure and the heart are may usually be discerned by the general tenor of the life, for "by their fruits ye shall know them." The prevalence of a supreme love of the world will be denoted by the habitual preference for

the claims of the world above those of spiritual religion, where the two come in conflict. The worldly professor finds more delight in his counting-house than in the sanctuary; he prefers poring over his schemes of gain to mingling with the people of God in exercises of devotion; his day-book will be more entertaining, if in the midst of prosperity, than his Bible; he wrestles more to acquire new patrons in his business than for the favour of God in his closet, and his heart is more elated by the success of an investment than by the tidings of a soul's conversion, or of the general outpouring of the Spirit in a revival.

How many among the professed followers of Christ answer to this melancholy picture! Sometimes, indeed, they may say one to another, "Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh from the Lord." They may come unto God's house as his people come, and sit before him as his people, but they hear his words and will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness. Their profession and their practice do not agree; they are not in reality what their profession would reasonably lead men to regard them. They are worshipping something else than God; they are bound about with the cincture of hypocrisy; they wear not the girdle of truth.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Having your loins girt about with truth.”

GENUINE gospel sincerity differs much from what has been spoken of in the foregoing chapter. It has as its foundation a regenerated heart. This, indeed, is indispensable to such an engagedness in the service of God as would imply the appropriation of any part of the armour of the Christian soldiery. Away from the God of truth there can be no evangelical truthfulness. The heart by nature is in bondage to him who is “the father of lies” and “was a liar from the beginning;” it is “deceitful above all things.” How can that which is deceitful above all things be capable of spiritual sincerity? Deceitfulness and sincerity are the opposites, not the companions, of each other. Hence the heart must be changed; that which was deceitful must

be taken out of our flesh, and another given us, so unlike the first that henceforth we shall be "new creatures."

This change of heart is no superficial thing. It involves the very elements of our being; it is called being "born again;" we date another life from its occurrence; it brings about a change of taste, a change of purpose, a change in the objects of affection, a change of character, a change in the whole end of our existence. So thorough and radical is this transformation, that it is spoken of as a quickening from the dead; "old things" are said to have "passed away, and all things to have become new;" and so mighty is the achievement when this change is wrought in a single soul, that even the angels in heaven rejoice over it.

No human power can ever accomplish this change; no power of priesthood nor of ceremonial, no outward reformation, no magic of ordinances, ever regenerated a soul; none but that almighty power which made the soul from nothing can make it live anew from the death in trespasses and sins; for we "were born," says the apostle, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The eternal Spirit is the great artificer of that new heart in which alone can be found the principles of an evangelical sincerity. By a direct and mysterious moving on the soul, of which we may not know the nature,



but whose results are manifest, the old depraved and deceitful nature is removed, and in its stead implanted another, which, in humble sincerity, chooses God as its portion, his Son as a Saviour, his will as its law, his service on earth as its employment, and his holy heaven on high as its eternal home; and wherever this new nature exists, there also the possessor of that nature has put on the girdle of truth.

Sincerity, such as is here implanted, shows itself in a genuine hatred of all sin. Sin was before the portion of the soul. In your unregenerate state the Scriptures declare you to have been "the servant of sin." So strong was your devotion to it that you drew it, as it were, with cart-ropes; you rolled it as a sweet morsel under your tongue.

True, indeed, in some of its more loathsome forms you may not have been an overt partaker. This your position in society, respect for good morals, fear of present results, and the restraints of early education, forbade, but in their spirit there is not one of the commandments of the decalogue under which you have not been arraigned and found guilty.

Now, the sincere Christian soldier wages his warfare against sin in his members and sin in his heart. Remnants of the old nature still cling to him, but these are not his

joy—they are his grief and burden. His unruly imagination may still go out after the old flesh-pots from which he partook in the days of his bondage, but hard are his wrestlings to bring back that imagination and those passions, to uproot and chasten those unholy desires, and bitter are his sorrows that he succeeds so imperfectly. “Being freed from sin,” he wishes no longer to be “the servant thereof.”

Nor is he satisfied with superficial discoveries of the evil within. He is honest with himself; he aims at a rigid scrutiny, a hunting out of all the hidden things. Unable to accomplish these discoveries himself, he resorts to him who knows the heart, and in all humility and earnestness, willing and wishing to know the worst, cries out, “Search me, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” If, on this divine investigation, too, there should be brought to light a sin dear as the right eye, he will pluck it out and cast it from him, or near as the right hand, he will cut that off, rather than having two eyes or two hands to be cast into hell fire.

Not simply for the consequences in that world of torment, however, does he hate this evil thing, but for its enmity to God, and all that is holy and good; for its intrinsic and essential loathsomeness, of which, alas! even now he tastes

the bitter fruits. Here, reader, you have something of the spirit of the soldier who has put on the girdle of truth.

Sincere also is the espousal of this soldier of the great Captain of Salvation as the Prince and Sovereign of his soul. No half-way devotion to such a leader will suffice for him. That same Spirit which raised him from the tomb in which the fall had laid him, and made him stand in sublime but humble majesty a son of God, has also revealed to his vision the glories of the anointed One. No longer is God's well-beloved to him as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness; no longer is the mystery of redemption but at best a theme for speculation, nor the sufferings on the cross a mere pathetic piece of pageantry; for with all these he has now a practical acquaintance,—an acquaintance which he trusts will evermore become closer and dearer. The Son of God is now the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; the mystery of redemption is an exhaustless fountain of living waters; the sufferings on the cross, the great, the touching transaction by which the curse for him was borne, and the wrath all turned away. The cross! the cross! how his spirit bows with sorrow and yet leaps with joy and hope as he looks upon the cross. That immaculate One who hangs upon it,

the heir of heaven, the partaker of the Godhead, the holy, harmless, undefiled, pouring out his blood, breathing out in agony his life, and all for such a worm! Ah! he is conquered now; the iron will which the thunders of the law could not break, the melting weapons of the cross, by the eternal Spirit, have subdued, and lowly in the dust beneath that cross the rebel sits, a rebel now no more. As the Roman soldier with his finger dipped in blood signed the oath of fidelity to his enlistment, and thus took the sacrament of the army he entered, so this conquered one, taken captive from the powers of sin and Satan, dips his finger in the blood of Calvary, receives the bread and wine, which set forth the great transaction on the cross, and incorporates it with his very life's blood, and thus takes the sacramental oath evermore to be a soldier of this smitten Saviour. Hearty is his espousal, sincere his devotion: he has put on truth for his girdle.

So much is sincerity the girdle of this soldier, so honest and whole-hearted is his devotion to his new Master, that there is not a word from this Master's lips but is dear to the servant's heart. Whether that word be spoken through patriarchs, prophets, or apostles, or directly by the mouth of him of whom patriarchs and prophets spake, and from whom apostles learned; whether by the ministry

of men commissioned to bear glad tidings of great joy to all people; whether by the mute eloquence of the broken body or the shed blood, or whether by the still small voice of the Spirit gently breathing within,—however these teachings may come, they are to him words of life; he recognises in them the voice of him who spake as never man spake, and trembling, yet trusting that he may know more of those hidden things whose knowledge thus far has proved such a treasure, he sits him down as a docile child to learn, whilst he says, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Is not this man, then, in earnest? is he not sincere? has he not put on truth for his girdle?

So sincere is the devotion of the genuine soldier of the cross to his glorious leader, that he truly loves all who in any degree bear the image of his Lord and Master. Loving the great original so well, he can but love all who bear his impress and breathe his Spirit. Imperfections and numerous frailties his fellow-soldiers may have, but too sadly has he felt his own infirmities and errors to condemn others for the want of entire symmetry of Christian character. As he longs for more of his Master’s image and Spirit for himself, so also he would rejoice to see more of these blessed lineaments in all who name the name of Jesus; but if, amidst numerous imperfections, he is able still to



discern a heart that would be conformed, and a life that would be devoted, to the pattern of the great original whom he adores, it is enough; in that bosom beats a heart in unison with his own, and in that life there are strugglings for the same great end for which he strives himself. This soldier and himself are enlisted under the same banner, exposed to similar hardships and dangers, warring against the same enemies, striving after the same achievements, and marching under the command of the same great leader to the same final, glorious victory. Called by the name of what distinctive tribe he may be, moving under what subordinate banner he may, encamping in what division of the army he may, he belongs to Israel's great militant hosts, to the one army "of the living God," and together they are to cross the Jordan, and together share the land of Canaan. He will recognise every such soldier as joined with him in a common brotherhood, and for the sake of him whom they both delight to serve and honour will embrace him in the bonds of a holy, spiritual affection. Sincerity marks the character of this friend of the Master here also as well as elsewhere; and in following out its lineaments do we not still discern a devotion to truth, a heaven-wrought sincerity, encircling him about like a girdle?

And according to the same pure and lofty principles, are

regulated his common associations in society; the girdle reaches around the entire soldier, and affects his conduct in comparatively the lesser transactions of life. That man must have lived to little purpose who has attained to maturity, and has not observed how much of hollow-heartedness and insincerity pervades the general associations and customs of society. In the early dawn of manhood, and before experience had come in to impart a true knowledge of mankind, you may, indeed, have regarded the professions of kindness and affection, and readiness to serve you, so profusely poured from human lips, as always the real language of the heart; but further acquaintance with fallen, perverse humanity has perhaps long since shown you how much of self-seeking or mere empty compliment there was in all this, and how little fulfilment of such professions attended the circumstances in which your poor heart needed most of the cordial of real friendship. So melancholy, indeed, may have been the discoveries of the hollow-heartedness, selfishness, and hypocrisy of mankind which have continued to crowd upon you in the hard journey of life, that you have been driven almost to the extreme of incredulity and disgust, and been ready with David to say in your haste, "All men are liars."

Now, as regards a portion of the world, such impres-

sions may be but too painfully true; but before embracing all mankind in this sweeping denunciation, pause and seek yet further, and you will find some sweet exceptions to the general depravity, some oases in this wide waste of false pretensions, some who feel in their hearts what their lips express, who, although they may be less profuse in proffers of kindness, are yet ready as far as in them lies to fulfil what they have led you to expect.

He who is girdled with sincerity, has eschewed guile, scorned deceit, flattery, and empty words which only please the ear, and bears with him through the whole range of society the aspect of an honest man. He fawns not for favour on the rich, great, and powerful in the world; he is not amongst those who, in order to be everywhere well spoken of, are willing in the most exceptionable sense to "be all things to all men,"—who are ready without scruple to assent to propositions however opposite, to agree with those whose sentiments are directly at variance, declaring both to be right, and wishing both success when success to the one must assuredly be defeat to the other. He will not, in order to be popular, say pleasant things to all, garnishing even their misdeeds with flattery. Nor is he one of those who profess to have no great preference for any one system of religious truth, and who can say to men of every

form of faith, that their creed expresses precisely the sentiments of his own heart.

All such time-serving the sincere man utterly eschews; in his estimation it involves falsehood as an essential element; and rather would he walk through life alone and in obscurity, forfeiting the good opinion of the multitude, and having his name and principles cast out as evil, than purchase favour and success at the sacrifice of truth.

What is the path of duty? what is truly for the good of my race and the glory of God? who are those really worthy of estimation? what are those doctrines which the Scriptures reveal, and what that conduct which will pass the scrutiny of the final Judge?—these are the questions which the faithful soldier asks himself, and according to which his principles, his conversation, his actions, his whole life are framed, and to the last maintained. Say what you will of such an one, cast out his name as evil if you will, but one thing you may not deny, that he is at least of proven sincerity,—that he wears about him a devotion to truth, a heaven-wrought sincerity, for his girdle.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“ Having your loins girt about with truth.”

SINCERITY does not exempt its possessor from the shafts of calumny and malice. These are a part of the evils inseparable from his warfare, and his sincerity is oftentimes the means of provoking assaults, and apparently enhancing his difficulties. In this evil world error meets a much readier sanction than truth, and he who comes out from the multitude and leads the life of an humble conscientious follower of Christ, will by no means escape the bitterness and hostility excited amongst wicked men by the exhibition of superior virtue. The world cannot bear the rebuke which a spiritual life casts upon its false principles and conduct; and hence the most fierce and bloody persecutions it has ever waged, have been those against what was most virtuous and divine. The Son of God was the



embodiment of truth itself, and he was slain ; and his cause, which has had for its object the propagation of the same great element of good, has always been most fiercely assailed when most faithfully and successfully accomplishing its glorious work.

But although the girdle of truth will not act as a charmed circle to shut out the assaults of wickedness, it does furnish a means of protection and of ultimate triumph over all such evils.

This end is accomplished, to some degree, by imparting firmness and stability to the character of the Christian soldier. Just as the mailed warrior was braced up and supported by his girdle, so does the soldier of the cross derive firmness and stability from his spiritual cincture. After diligent investigation and reflection, he has settled in his mind deep and wide principles of conduct. These constitute the basis of his character, and being in their nature unchangeable, must impart to his life uniformity and consistency.

He who acts without principle must be unstable in all his ways. He is blown about by every wind of doctrine ; he is the creature of impulse, and yields to its power, from whatever quarter comes the impelling force ; he is seeking selfish ends, and therefore changes and modifies both his sentiments and conduct to fall in with the popular current.

Had he lived when the Son of God was upon earth, he would have been equally ready to cry "Hosanna to the son of David," or "Crucify him, crucify him," as the star of the Redeemer seemed in the ascendant or under an eclipse; or had his lot been cast in those days when in England Popery and Protestantism had alternately the power and the purse, or when the Roundheads and the advocates of kingly and high ecclesiastical pretensions were exchanging places, he would, like many of those times, with equal thankfulness have received the mitre, if tendered to him, from Popish or from Protestant hands, or would have piously sung psalms with Cromwell, or fought in the armies which were raised to crush the "usurper." Such a man is not sincere. But one principle has he adhered to in all these phases of character, and that has been, whatever fluctuations occurred, always to keep on that side in whose hands were the reins of power, always to sit at that table on which was spread out the largest repast of loaves and fishes.

Now need I assure you that with him who wears the girdle of truth such self-seeking and instability is utterly impracticable. Those principles of rectitude which lie deep in his heart will impel him to choose and pursue the right, whether it be clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, or whether it appear in tattered

rags; whether it be frowned or fawned upon; whether the multitude are in its triumphant train, or whether in the wide world it have no other advocate than himself. The apostles—dragged from the gloomy prison, when life or death seemed hanging on the words they might utter—stood up as fearless for their Master and his cause as if they had been on the judgment-seat and their lofty auditors the prisoners at the bar. Paul, single-handed and alone, preached Christ and him crucified with equal ardour, faithfulness, and fearlessness, when speaking to the haughty sages who looked upon the cross as a stumbling-block and foolishness, as when writing his letters to the saints which were at Corinth, Ephesus, or Rome. These devoted men were sincere in their espousals of their Lord; they believed in the truths taught them by their crucified and ascended Redeemer as fully as they credited the existence of a God or their own, and in all fidelity poured out the fervent breathings of their honest hearts, conferring not with flesh and blood.

The question as to the favour his ways of truthfulness will find among men must not enter into the considerations which determine the conduct of the Christian soldier. If the sunshine of favour falls upon him he will be thankful, and under its light tread cheerfully his onward way; but

if his march is shrouded in deep darkness, and studded thick with dangers, the thought of forsaking it is not harbored even for a moment. Like the great steamship which, with her bowsprit pointed for the haven, pursues her ever onward course, whether the sea be calm and peaceful, and the breezes auspicious, or whether struggling in the teeth of the tempest and dashing through the mountain wave, so alike amidst calm and tempest on that tumultuous sea where his little bark is cast, this spiritual voyager presses ever onwards to that haven for which he has fixed his course at the outset. Or to use a figure more appropriate to the imagery of the present subject, he enters the battle-field with equal readiness, whether the hosts arrayed against him are apparently superior or inferior to those with which he is mustered, and fights with equal daring and determination, whether for the time the day seems going against him or in his favour; thinking but of this, that in this cause he has enlisted for life, in this battle there is no discharge on earth, that having put the armour on he must never lay it off, that if any man draw back the Master's soul can have no pleasure in him. He loves that cause, and for his heart's affections he will ever fight. Through all changes, and in every danger, his manly form is still erect, strengthened and braced up by the girdle of truth.

Sincerity affords protection, also, to the Christian soldier, by removing from his character many vulnerable points. Whatever temporary popularity and success may be gained by the hypocrite, there is no one who, in the end, lays himself more open to assault, no one who suffers more in the recoil of his own weapons, or more fatally falls, taken captive in his own toils. For a time it may be comparatively easy to support an unreal character, to cover dishonesty with the guise of integrity, indifference and dislike, with smiles and assurances of friendship, sympathy, and affection, and a wicked heart with the outward garb of piety; but, for the most part, this can succeed only for a time. The insincere man can scarcely fail to attempt too much; his dupes become too numerous, and can too easily compare their experience as to the practical results of these professions; his great profusion in proffers of kindness will excite suspicion that what is ever so ready on the lip may not always come from the heart; and as for his religious pretensions, the Omniscient eye has always seen through the outward veil, and God has

“Abhorred the sacrifice  
Where not the heart is found.”

You will easily perceive what must be the end of this course of insincerity, how it will destroy confidence, excite



distrust, enfeeble, disable, and eventually secure an utter overthrow.

On the other hand sincerity will inspire confidence, and the longer and fiercer the trials to which it is exposed the more brightly will it shine. Unvarying principles which have survived the most rigid tests will prove themselves genuine; and in that hour when even those who have been wont to revile need the cordial of a spirit in which there is no guile, the sincere and humble Christian will be appealed to, into his ear will be told the story of grief, and from his hand will be sought the needful help. Those whose condition requires a character which may be relied upon, will not fail to resort to him who has been willing to pass through all fires rather than abandon the firm convictions of his soul, and in the day of adversity sincerity will triumph, so that even the lips of its former enemies shall be made vocal in its praise.

Witness an example of the triumph of this grace in the persecution and exaltation of Daniel. Princes, governors, counsellors, and captains were marshalled against him to drive him from the worship of his God; on penalty of being cast into the den of lions he must not offer a petition to the object of his soul's adoration. But rather will this faithful servant part with his life than part with the favour

of his God; rather will he go into the den of lions, and be torn limb from limb, mangled and killed by the beasts made furious from hunger, than prove a treacherous follower of his espoused Master. Upon his knees, then, he kneels three times a day, and prays and gives thanks before his God, as he did aforetime; and down into the den of wild beasts is he cast, doubtless expecting to be devoured; but the jaws of those beasts are shut, and harmless they are rendered by the "God of Daniel," so that they do him no hurt, and from the jaws of the lions he is brought out in safety. Now, think you not this adherence to his faith in Daniel, right in the face of death, was a most impressive tribute to his character,—marking him in the mind of Darius the king, as a man whose sincerity in his profession must be unquestionable? Would not this adhesion to principle in defiance of death, have taught the monarch that in all his empire he could not perhaps find a man more to be trusted? and was it not for this reason, as well as because of the divine deliverance which had been vouchsafed, that the king put honour upon Daniel,—was there not here in the end the triumph of sincerity? So that however dark and gloomy may be the hour, however stern and terrible the nature of the conflict, yet braced up by the girdle of truth the soldier of Christ may emerge safely from the evil day.

And no small support does the soldier of the cross derive from that consciousness of the approval of his divine leader which the wearing of this girdle imparts. He has intelligently, heartily, sincerely espoused the cause and kingdom of the great Captain of the militant hosts. For this he has turned his back upon the world's attractions, he has crucified his flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, he has borne the heat and burden of many a day of hardship, and fought in many a battle;—in his innermost heart has he for better or worse thrown himself into this great spiritual enterprise. In this one thing he has embarked his mortal and his immortal all.

Now, do you tell me that in that heart where dwells a confidence so great as this abandonment for one thing would argue, there can be doubts as to the final issue in the mind of him who makes the sacrifice and consecration? As sincerely as he credits the fact that there is a God, so truly does his heart repose in this full persuasion, that whatever may be the threatening danger, or however fierce the struggle, he will yet have reason to rejoice,—that Zion's monarch has neither forgotten his cause nor his people, but that as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about them that fear him,—that though in a little wrath God may have hid his face

for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy.

This very conviction of the secured and unalterable favour of God upon ourselves and the ways we tread, is itself a whole tower of strength to the soul. This thought—that God is for him, inspires the warrior with an undying strength and courage. It breathes hope into his desponding bosom, quickens his languid footsteps, cheers him when the strokes fall thick about him, and carries him forward amidst all the conflicts of the evil day, firm and unshaken, pressing steadily forward to the last.

To my mind there is not in all uninspired history, a picture more lofty or sublime, than that of Luther on his way to Worms;—a poor, despised, excommunicated monk, summoned to appear before the world's united power in conclave for his ruin, and when friends are bemoaning themselves about him, and beseeching him not with open eyes to walk right into the open jaws of death, saying, “I will go to Worms, though there be as many devils there as there be tiles upon the houses.” And to my mind there is not in all the inspired pictures of apostolic valour, one more sublime, glorious, and affecting, than that of Paul on the sea-shore at Miletus, with the elders weeping round him, saying, “And now behold, I go

bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

Sincerely had these men of God espoused their Master's cause, and sincerely did they believe that the Master would not leave them in their evil days of adversity and trial, and, trusting the promised grace, they were braced up for conflict and for victory.

O reader, seek the grace divine to help you also to put this girdle on. Let sincerity attend your every thought, word, and action; let it shine in the social circle, amidst the mart of business, and especially in those spiritual employments which have to do directly with the God of truth. Wear this girdle, and you will find it a cincture not only fulfilling the ends already brought to view, but as beautiful as useful. It shall shine not in the lustre of gold, and gems, and precious stones, which perish in the using, but in the pure and serene brightness of truth itself, which, from its nature, is immortal and imperishable.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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“Having on the breastplate of righteousness.”

WE are permitted to bring from the armory of the Lord a second piece of the gospel panoply, and wish to point out to you its nature and offices, with the hope that you may see its value, and avail yourself of the privilege afforded of making it your own.

This piece of the armour is a breastplate, without which a suit of mail would be incomplete and essentially defective. Its office, as the name imports, is to cover the chest and afford protection to the vital organs there.

The Grecian breastplate was a half-corslet, originally made of hemp twisted into small cords and closely woven together, but in the improvements of art was constructed of iron, brass, and other metals, rendered so hard as absolutely to defy any of the weapons of offensive warfare then

known. Plutarch says "that Zoilus an artificer, having made a present of two iron brigandines (breastplates) to Demetrius Poliorcetes, for an experiment of their hardness, caused an arrow to be shot out of an engine called catapulta, placed about twenty-six paces off, which was so far from piercing the iron that it scarcely razed or made the least impression on it." The metal was usually highly polished, too, so as to reflect the light, and thus dazzle the eyes and strike terror to the heart of an enemy. Hence a classic writer, speaking of one arrayed in complete panoply, says, that

"Dressed in his glittering breastplate he appeared,  
Frightful with scales of brass."

You perceive how fitly such a piece of armour illustrates the formidable and protective portion of the panoply with which the believer is here arrayed. Righteousness is the breastplate of the Christian soldier, and a sure defence is it against "the wiles of the devil."

There is a righteousness, indeed, which men often fabricate for themselves, which comes not from the armory of God—which is of spurious material, and affords no availing defence.

Of this nature is that righteousness which men go about to establish for themselves by an ostensible obedience to the

law ; and this indeed would avail were the obedience perfect, and we still unfallen subjects of God's great empire. In primeval innocence our first parents stood clad in a righteousness of their own. Perfectly sinless and holy, and rendering complete and cheerful obedience to every iota of their Sovereign's will, they stood accepted then, as do unfallen angels now, in their own unsullied righteousness. Against such there can be no denunciations of wrath, no unanswered and unanswerable claims which must be satisfied through another if satisfied at all.

But with us there can be no perfect obedience. We are not sinless, but always sinning ; we are not able even to render a perfect obedience for the future, much less to make atonement for the past, but are as helpless as we are sinful. We have all gone astray ; we have come short of the knowledge of the glory of God ; our carnal hearts are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can they be, for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." How futile are the efforts of those already under the power of the prince of darkness, to array themselves in a vesture which will protect them from his assaults, and yet how prone are men by nature to seek protection under a panoply of their own devising.

Even where there is no light of revelation, do not man-

kind give tokens of a consciousness of guilt and of the need of some defence? In default of the panoply divine do they not go about, themselves to make atonement for their sins? Do they not erect altars and offer upon them human sacrifices, burn incense before shrines of gold and silver to appease images also the workmanship of their own hands, and offer not only the fruit of their bodies, but whole hecatombs of human beings, and at enormous price, present their vain oblations? But do these sacrifices secure the favour of Heaven? Do these rivers of human blood, these groans, these mines of gold or silver, purchase release from the curse of God's holy law? Do not all of these still leave the helpless victim under the wrath divine and the pollution of sin, open to the successful assaults of the devil, to be pierced by his darts, bound in his fetters, and held by him in eternal hopeless captivity?

But even where the light of revelation has been poured down in living floods, where the shades of superstition and error should have been banished, do not men still seek to array themselves in a righteousness which is not of God? Are not even those ordinances which were designed to lead us to the divine armory, and enable us to appropriate the panoply, often themselves resorted to for protection, and prostituted into a vain substitute for that which alone will avail?

Of the vast multitudes who made up the hosts of Israel, and were accustomed to assemble at the altars of Jerusalem, how few ever regarded the outpouring of the blood of beasts as but symbolic of the true and only propitiation. How many placed their confidence in the mere symbols, trusting in the typical sacrifice, and hoping for favour by virtue of the offering itself. So intent were they, indeed, on thus completing their own righteousness, that, not satisfied with an outward compliance with the letter of the ceremonial, and magnifying the efficacy of their oblations, they added yet others not prescribed, and brought the mint, annis, and cummin, made broad their phylacteries, prolonged their prayers, and sounded aloud their alms, until they had at least convinced themselves that they were "not as other men."

See yonder Pharisee! He enters the temple with no consciousness of unworthiness; he thinks not of taking an obscure place; he halts not in the outer court, but with measured step and lofty mien advances far within the sacred precincts. Broad is his phylactery, erect his form and bold his forehead; he is borne down by no consciousness of guilt; he seems to be in need of nothing, whilst from his opened lips are heard, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even



as this publican." Yes! this self-sufficient Pharisee believes in human depravity as far as the poor publican is concerned, and is willing enough to heap upon him condemnation, but as for his own soul, why he is thankful that he is not as other men. Not as other men! "I fast twice in the week," says he, "I give tithes of all that I possess." He underwent bodily mortifications, and parted with his goods in charity, and these, together with abstinence from several open flagrant sins, are righteousness enough for him.

Had this man, think you, the remotest conception that he was not arrayed in a panoply proof against the assaults of the devil and the wrath of a holy God? Did he not look upon his haughty bosom as steeled with the breastplate of a perfect righteousness? Yet he was one of those of whom Christ said, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees." Naked and helpless was he, and exposed to all the wiles of Satan. The material of his breastplate was spurious. Are there not many Pharisees in Christian lands?

Others, again, make an outward reformation their breastplate of righteousness.

Here is one who, in his former life, sinned openly and with an outstretched arm; he was profane, sensual, extremely immoral and irreligious. But, to some extent, he has been

convinced of the error of his ways; he now refrains from profanity, profligacy, and other open immorality; attends upon the public ordinances of religion; he is a good citizen, neighbour, father, and an unfailing friend to the poor.

Hard is it to convince this man that he has not escaped from the power of the evil one, and wrought out for himself an impregnable breastplate. His outward life is surely much changed for the better; his conduct is approved and commended of men; he cannot see why, also, it should not be accepted of God. "It is not with me," says he, "as in times past; I have forsaken my wicked ways; I am not as these profane, immoral men around me, nor even as some of these church-members; I try to do as I would be done by; I am regularly in my place at the house of God, and do something in the cause of charity; what more can be asked?" Were our Lord in person to repeat to him the commandments, he would say, "All these have I kept," though he might not add, "from my youth up." He has wrought out for himself a righteousness, and under this piece of panoply his fears are lulled to rest, and in carnal security his heart cries, Peace, peace. But is there peace? Has he not mistaken the material of which this part of the armour must be made? Is not his breastplate also spurious?

Others, again, fabricate a breastplate of righteousness by attempting to overbalance evil deeds, by their so-called good deeds.

Such persons reckon up their relations to God, after the manner of a commercial transaction. They charge themselves with what they regard as sins, credit themselves with what they consider good works, and then strike the balance, taking care always that this shall be in their own favour. Conscious that they at times come short of the strict rules of Christian morality,—admitting that even according to their own accepted standard they are found wanting, they must by some means cancel the handwriting against them. Hence all abstinence from open immorality, all church-going and respect for gospel institutions, all acts of charity, are set down as so many good works, and they cannot believe that a merciful God will not accept the latter as a compensation full for all claims on the ground of the former. They see not that these so-called good works proceed after all from the mere selfishness of a carnal heart, that there is no real hatred for sin on its own account, nor aim at the glory of God in all they do; nor do they perceive that even if their obedience from any given time were perfect, so that thenceforth they sinned not at all, yet this would only suffice for that immediate portion of life, if it

in any manner sufficed, and the claims because of former transgressions must still remain uncanceled ; that the heart is still unrenewed, Christ still no Saviour to them, and their souls still in bondage to the devil.

Remember, reader, that passage, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified,” and then see how, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, all this commercial righteousness is found wanting. This breastplate may lull conscience to rest, and induce a sense of security, but still there can be no safety under so spurious a piece of armour.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“Having on the breastplate of righteousness.”

THE essential element of that breastplate which forms a part of the gospel panoply is the righteousness of Christ. This may not indeed seem to be the immediate and direct defence from the assaults of spiritual enemies, so much as a protection from the wrath of God primarily, and then as yielding in its practical results a means of defence against the devil and his allies. But without this righteousness it is impossible that there can be safety, since then not only would we be exposed to those formidable evils which now beset us, but, what is infinitely worse, God himself would be against us. The fiercest of all the dangers which threaten us in our natural condition is from the curse of an avenging law; and until this can be averted it is vain for us to seek refuge from any other evils. A God who is



angry with us every day, whose wrath abides upon us, and whose righteous law calls continually for vengeance, will afford no protection; we shall be perfectly exposed to the onsets of the devil and his hellish crew; our hearts will favour the admission of our worst enemies, our destruction will be sure.

For this reason, then, we say the righteousness of Christ is fundamental to the protection of the believer from any and every foe. This alone can appease the divine wrath, satisfy the law's demands, roll away the curse, and purchase for us the favour of God.

A most gracious and godlike errand was it truly, for the Lord of glory to veil his divinity in human form, that he might obey the law's precepts and suffer its heavy penalty in our room and stead, and thus provide for us that which we could not have provided for ourselves. And yet on this errand the Lord of glory came; he tabernacled among men, obeyed the law's behests, suffered on the cross, and lay in the tomb. Upon the tree he bore the curse which would have sunk us all to hell. He who knew no sin was made sin,—regarded and treated as a sinner by substitution for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

This doctrine of the substitution of Christ for the sinner

is indispensable to salvation—it is the great “mystery of godliness.” Our situation demanded it. Against the highest, holiest of all governments, the government divine, we were rebels. The law of that government was holy, and as immutable as holy. It could not lessen its demands to come down to our inability and imperfections. “Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them” was graven irrevocably upon the tablets of revelation. Not having continued in all things written in the law, it could but continue to pour its fearful curses on our devoted heads. Hence the necessity for a substitute, the provision of a righteousness for us, which could be laid to our account, and being considered our own, satisfy the law so that it should curse no more.

Now do you not see in the work which Christ has wrought out precisely the provision which your case demands? He was bound to no obedience, and hence what he rendered and endured was voluntary, and by reason of the mysterious union with his divine nature, which was infinite, this voluntary obedience and suffering were possessed of a divine virtue. And as he could not need this merit for himself, it was made ready, an infinite store, to be laid over to the account of the hitherto hopelessly accursed. **T**he righteousness thus provided being received by the sinner

through faith, he is regarded as if he were himself righteous, freely justified, and as cordially accepted as if he had never sinned at all. He is in Christ Jesus, and having on his righteousness, "there is now no condemnation." An angry God is angry now no more, the law has laid its vengeance by, the hitherto terror-stricken one looks up with the spirit of adoption, and in child-like affection cries "Abba, Father!" Here, then, you perceive a main element of the Christian warrior's breastplate: and with bosom mailed in this heaven-provided panoply he stands accepted an heir of glory, safe from the curses of Sinai, harmless from the gates of hell.

But the term "righteousness" is of various signification, and there are other senses in which it denotes the material of the Christian soldier's breastplate. Christ's righteousness affords a sufficient and effectual safeguard against the divine curse; but he also secures through his intercession the offices of the Spirit to renew us in the whole man, after the image of God, and enable us more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. In other words, he secures for us holiness of heart and life,—and an imparted as well as an imputed righteousness is ours. We are not only "in Christ," but "Christ is formed in us, the hope of everlasting glory." Of this latter quality the Saviour

speaks, where he says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled;" and in this sense also the apostle speaks in this same epistle, where he says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Personal holiness, then, is another element in the believer's breastplate,—a holiness wrought by the Spirit, and after the pattern, and to bring us into the likeness, of God. A high standard is this, reader,—the image of God, and yet its attainment is indispensable to complete your panoply, as you may see from several reasons.

First of all, holiness is required by an express command. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." The high and holy One here sets himself before you, and tells you to take him as your pattern, assigning as the reason his own intrinsic purity. He gives no mean exemplar; he honours you by placing before you the loftiest of all. He requires holiness of his angels, much more exalted intelligences than yourself; should you not count yourself happy to come under the same command which sways its power over those bright beings who inhabit the world of purity above? "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy:"—will not

the good soldier strive to follow his leader in all imitable virtues?

Again, by the law of consistent association, resemblance is indispensable to congeniality with God. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" How can you walk with God except you bear his image, breathe his Spirit, and pursue his footsteps? Without love for himself, his people, his service, and his kingdom, where can there be the principles of resemblance on which true friendship must be based?

Nor can you enter heaven without personal holiness, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Destitute of a likeness to God, you cannot be an inhabitant of his eternal dwelling-place on high. Without love for him, obedience to his will, devotion to his service, congeniality with his friends, could heaven be heaven to you, even were you admitted within the portals above? With no spirit of devotion within your bosom, there would be no heart for the song of the blood-washed throng who shout the anthem unto God and to the Lamb; your voice and your harp would be silent, or if audible would create dissonance in the celestial harmony. Having no delight in the object which sheds the glory and awakes the symphonies above, you would shrink from the presence of him who sits upon the



throne ; God would be to you a consuming fire, and heaven would not be heaven to you, but the deepest, most unutterable hell. Alike, then, by the law of your nature and of revelation, is demanded this second element of the Christian warrior's breastplate.

Do you inquire as to the nature of this portion of the breastplate? Have you seen the necessity of personal holiness, and do you wish to follow after its attainment? The incipency of this state has been pointed out, in explaining the "girdle of truth," where a renewed nature is set forth as indispensable to genuine godly sincerity. The principles of holiness are imparted in the new creation of the soul, and what remains is that you should seek to carry out what is there so gloriously begun.

At the outset of your spiritual life you are but "a babe in Christ Jesus ;" you are afterwards to seek the estate of manhood. In the new world you are not to remain an infant, but to grow up to a fulness of knowledge, strength, and stature. Under a divine parentage, and the tutelage of a heavenly teacher, and amidst the household of faith, there can be no reason for a state of perpetual infancy. Such there may seem to be amongst the brotherhood, but if there be such, there must have been with them a forgetfulness of their high calling and glorious privileges, which would

argue but little acquaintance with that world into which grace has introduced them. They are at best but “weak and sickly.” Be not like to them, but strive to outgrow them in spiritual stature.

As in the natural world the lapse of time gives a more familiar acquaintance with the things of that world, so must it be in the spiritual. What to the infant’s eyes were strange sights, what to his ears were strange sounds, what to his tongue was difficult of utterance, what his hands were unable to perform, the experience and tuition of his senses, and the training and practice of muscle and of limb, must render easy. With his growth he acquires clearer views, firmer principles, greater power of resistance, endurance, labour,—and he who once hung a helpless babe upon his mother’s breast, is now the stalwart man, capable of large thoughts, hard conflicts, and powerful achievements.

This scriptural imagery from the physical man, must have its application spiritually to every true soldier of the cross, and all the principles implanted in the new birth must come into a stronger development in the future life, until expanded into the manhood in Christ Jesus. The sense of the hatefulness of sin must grow stronger, until the evil thing can be detected where in the spiritual infancy it

eluded observation; pride, anger, covetousness, lust, and all those corrupt passions which made up the remains of sin, must have been struggled with until a greater power of resistance is attained and their dominion has been weakened; faith, love, long-suffering, patience, and every Christian virtue must have been cultivated until their exercise has acquired the power of habit, and they have become as it were natural to the soul. Thus are you to acquire purity of heart, tenderness of conscience, kindness of temper, and with these acquirements you will have evidence of the indwellings of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

The motives of the Christian soldier, even where he engages in the same general employments with the children of this world, are of a far higher and purer order than theirs. The unrighteous are governed by principles which have supreme reference to self. What will promote my comfort, what my wealth, what my good name, what the position of my family in society,—these are the considerations which rule in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Remove these, and you have taken away the main-springs from their every enterprise.

Not thus is it with the faithful follower of Christ, who knows that in order to holiness of heart there must be a

supreme reference to the interests of that kingdom of which he is a subject—to the glory of his Lord and Master, in all that he does. He believes that whether he eats, drinks, or whatsoever he does, he should do all for the glory of God. His breastplate has to do with his bosom, and hence his work involves much attention towards keeping right his heart.

But a slight experience in the spiritual kingdom is requisite in order to discover how difficult it is to keep the heart. Out of that heart are the issues of life. The outward conduct may be ever so blameless, but if the motives of the heart are wrong, all is wrong in the sight of God. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” God looketh not upon the outward appearance. He judgeth not as man judgeth. He sees the inside of the whited sepulchre; and none can be the possessors of his imparted righteousness who do not seek to banish from that sepulchre the rottenness of sin, and the dead men’s bones of former evil passions, principles, and habits, and to make what was once a mere garnished tomb a heaven-built dwelling-place, in which the Spirit shall reside to carry on his blessed work.

That man has greatly mistaken the nature of true holiness who can think himself a follower of the glorious leader of the militant hosts, whilst his heart is but a place where

polluted imaginations and corrupt thoughts are holding their revels,—who, although avoiding the open act of vileness, still paints in fancy the varied scenes of licentiousness and vice, holding sweet companionship in spirit with these hateful things, and enjoying in imagination what he fears to practise in the overt act. That man, too, has greatly mistaken the nature of true holiness who is not habitually striving to keep alive within his soul the sacred fires of heavenly love and of every other Christian grace.

It is this very work of heart-keeping which is at once the most difficult of all achievements, and the most striking peculiarity of those who march under the banner of salvation. To accomplish this, hard struggles, constant watching, and continuous toil are required. The precepts, the prohibitions, the examples of God's word, and especially the pattern of his great leader, must be pondered. He must compare his own heart with the pious breathings of those whose inmost spirits have been opened and spread out on the page of inspiration. He must set apart special and frequent seasons for self-examination, and with an unsparing hand deal with himself in all fidelity;—sitting in judgment upon his most sincere services, and asking of the great Searcher of all hearts to search him as with a lighted candle. He must bring out from their lurking-places all



secret sins, and, though they may be dear as the right eye or the right hand, nail them to the cross. He must watch against the uprisings of the old Adam, so as to drive him from the field before he shall have acquired a strong foothold. He must be constant and devout in his attendance on all the means of grace, ever striving to apply to himself the truths which he hears, and reduce those truths to practice. He must be much in prayer, praying that he may not be led into temptation, praying when under the power of temptation, praying for new supplies of knowledge, a more enlarged experience in the hidden things of the kingdom, and for a more expanded measure of usefulness. In all these particulars he must strive to do the work of heart-keeping, and in so doing will be girding more closely to his bosom the glorious breastplate of the panoply divine.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“Having on the breastplate of righteousness.”

WHERE there is a heart kept right with God, you will not be surprised to see the evidences of this breastplate on the outer man; for though an externally correct deportment will not of itself argue personal holiness, yet where there is within this spiritual uprightness towards God, there is a fountain opened from which shall issue streams in accordance with these inward principles. Their sanctifying power will be seen and felt in every relation which the soldier of the cross maintains.

Has this servant of Christ been a man of violence, whose angry passions have rendered him the terror of those about him—who has been wont to indulge an irritable fretful nature? In putting on this breastplate he must put this

nature off. True, the conquest of this turbulent spirit will be no easy achievement. It will require constant vigilance, and all the energies which by grace divine he may be enabled to exert. Many will be the occasions for repentance, many the bitter tears and groans over the outbursts of the hateful spirit by which he has been taken unawares. Few but those who have been in the conflicts know with what the choleric man must contend in order to the conquest of his former self. Yet this nature must be subdued, or he cannot bear the likeness of him who was meek and lowly of heart. The lion must be transformed to the lamb. It is no sufficient excuse for continuing his former turbulent self that such is his temperament, that he is not like the mild and amiable, who have but little of this to strive against. The very object of that religion whose profession he has made is to renew him after the image of God. And where there is the spirit of the faithful servant there will be this renewal—the lion will be transformed to the lamb. Where was wont to be the man of violence, irritable and impatient, will now be the gentle and forbearing Christian, able by God's grace even to endure evil treatment and reviling for the sake of him who when reviled reviled not again; for such is the spirit of the true soldier, of every one who wears righteousness for his breastplate.

This implement of the warfare also secures for its wearer fidelity in all the interests committed to him. He sustains important relations to others, to those allied with him by the ties of nature, to the church and to the world at large; and that would be but a poor pretence to holiness whose influence would not be seen and felt in positions so important as are these. The enlistment of the soldier of the cross severs not, but rather binds the more firmly, the ties of his natural affections. Such ties indeed must not be allowed to intervene between him and his Master, or to impede his onward march, and there may be occasions when he must trample upon those most sacred of all natural affections, and forsake even father, mother, kindred and friends, and tread his thorny path alone.

With such as you, reader, in this favoured day, this great crucifixion of the heart's affections may not be required. You are permitted still to inhabit your much-loved home; still to be greeted by the faces, and cheered by the voices, of those who call you father, brother, husband, son; and your piety need not sever, but should sanctify, these endearing bands. In this "world in miniature" your light must shine. Here, where your character is seen in dishabille, where you are most unguarded, speak most freely the honest sentiments of the heart and show out your real self—here

it is that the holiness of the Christian must be seen—must be felt.

Those who are your companions here, perhaps, may take their impressions of the soldiery, the cause, and the kingdom, from what they witness in you. They know your high profession, they have heard you called by the name of Christian, seen you sit at the sacramental board, bow your knees in prayer, and keep company with the hosts who are ostensibly on a pilgrimage for a better land. What if, amidst all that such a profession would give reason to expect, they should see you no better than themselves, and perhaps in some respects not even so exemplary?

“Be ye circumspect,” is a divine injunction, and in none of life’s numerous scenes is there more need for circumspection than where the Christian is in the midst of his household circle. Unkindness and injustice there cannot pass unheeded. The failure to render to all within that circle the dues which for so many reasons they have a right to expect, will produce an impression more lasting than if graven on tablets of brass. To parents, brothers, sisters, husband, wife, servants—all the members of this world in miniature, the faithful follower of Christ will evince the fruits of this holiness of nature by his constant forbearance, kind consideration, respect and courtesy, and especially his concern



that they may join him in his march to the Canaan of his hopes. Thus living, in that sphere also will be seen the breastplate of his righteousness.

Or if you pass beyond the threshold of your home out into the busy world, the sanctifying power of personal holiness must also be seen and felt. Men of the world will take knowledge of the Christian soldier, as to whether or not he has been with his Master. They know also what his calling implies, and what they have a right to expect from one who, by implication, has passed condemnation upon themselves. Not sleepless will they be to your defects, not slow to point the finger of derision at your inconsistencies, nor in turn to condemn you for professing what you do not practise.

The customs of business tolerate much which the spiritually upright man should regard with aversion. Not a few of the ostensible followers of the Saviour are beguiled into what are sometimes termed the "tricks of trade," under the plea that such practices are indispensable to success. And what if they were indispensable to success? Would this render lawful that which clearly contravenes the settled principles of honesty? If the world at large can only thrive by keeping out of sight the defects and exaggerating the merits of their merchandise, is this a reason

why the Christian, who is set for a light to the world, should follow that world into its realms of darkness? Better that success were never yours, better live in poverty on its bread and water, keeping a pure conscience, than roll in luxury and wealth, dishonouring your high profession. If you, set as you are as an example to others, follow the multitude to do evil, wherein are ye better than they? Is gain your chief good, that at its shrine must be sacrificed the lofty principles of true piety? Wherein is your warfare, if not against the obvious obliquities of trade,—a warfare the more demanded as the evil is more prevalent?

“Honesty is the best policy,” is a proverb which the Christian soldier does not forget; but on far loftier ground than that of mere policy does his integrity rest. Before him stands that law which he feels is holy, just, and good, with the illustrious example of his great leader as well as of the followers who have gone before him; in his vision rises pre-eminent the intrinsic excellence of right principles, the honour of his glorious calling, and the necessity of a warfare against the evils he encounters; and taking as his standard neither the conduct of the multitude, nor the prospect of greater thrift, he is an upright man because he feels that it is the will of his Master and the choice of his heart that he should be such. Ten thousand times rather

would he lose all the gain this world could give, than part with the principles of a lofty Christian integrity.

Do you wish to look upon one of like passions with yourself, wearing this breastplate of the spiritual armour,—bringing forth in his life the kindness, gentleness, and uprightness, which emanate from an indwelling holiness of heart? See, then, the picture painted by the pencil of inspiration—“I put on *righteousness*,” says Job, “and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame: I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.” Or do you wish to hear the utterance of apostolic lips as to what you should be? Listen to such language as this,—“Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another.” “Bless them which curse you, bless and curse not.” “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for

in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good!" "Avoid the appearance of evil." Or would you listen to language directly from the lips of him at whose call you have come up to the warfare? Then hear him, heed him, while he says in familiar words, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Do this, reader, and then beyond all question, and over and above all your imperfections, you will wear a heaven-wrought righteousness for your breastplate.

Now you will not wonder that a piece of panoply, such as you have just seen, should prove a defence to the Christian soldier. Look at the exceeding great and precious promises of God to the man of uprightness. "For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." "The righteous shall hold on his way." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." "Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved." "He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly." "Such as are upright are his delight." "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing

will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Such are some of the promises which are vouchsafed to the spiritually upright man. The high priest of the Levitical economy wore upon his bosom a rich and costly breastplate, studded with precious stones; but these precious promises, with the blessings temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which they comprehend—these are the priceless gems which glitter in the breastplate of the soldier of the cross.

And why should not a breastplate studded with such jewels be a defence to the bosom of the Christian in his warfare? What is there which he can possibly require, which in these and like promises is not included? If he is to hold on his way, to be the delight of the Lord, to be compassed with favour as with a shield, to be delivered out of all his afflictions, and his end to be peace—if God is as a sun to illumine his way, as a shield to defend him—if grace for every possible emergency of life or death, and glory after death, are to be his, and from him no good thing is to be withheld, then say, reader, what else can the soldier of salvation ask? What other wants can he have beside those embraced under these varied and wonderful promises? Why should not a breastplate combining such elements be to him a certain defence, cheering him when discouraged, comforting him when afflicted, bringing him back when he



has turned aside into dangerous paths, and in all times of trial and conflict still whispering assurances of safety and ultimate triumph? Why should not the soldier hold on his way when he has bound on his bosom righteousness for his breastplate?

No little protection, also, is there furnished by the inward approval which is enjoyed by the soldier who has on this implement of righteousness. That man who has his conscience against him labours always at a disadvantage. In no position can human power be reduced to more perfect weakness than where the spirit is oppressed with a conscience ill at ease; where it is fettered and bound down by a sense of its own wrong-doings. With the loftier and sterner part of his nature against him, the soldier is not his entire self in any enterprise, he is only a small fraction of the man. Condemned by his own heart, how can he lift up his countenance with joy, or go fearless on his march? Easily must he be discouraged, dismayed, and vanquished. The same tribes of Israel who, in the days when faith and love were living in their bosoms, were able to meet and trample under their triumphant feet every foe, when afterwards, by forsaking God and doing deeds of wickedness, they had brought upon themselves the consciousness of guilt, were oppressed with such a faintness of heart that they were

chased by the sound of a shaking leaf, and fled when there was none pursuing.

But when instead of the condemning there is the approving conscience, the mountain-weight which oppresses the spirit and crushes the energies is removed. With an approving conscience the Christian soldier goes forth in his entire strength, with his house no longer divided against itself. Cheered and braced up by the certain conviction that he is walking safely, he has secured a strength and evenness of purpose, a resolution and fearlessness more than human,—that which fits one man to chase a thousand and two to put ten thousand to flight. He feels the power and shows the efficacy of the principle of holiness, and in every evil day stands safely sheltered by righteousness for his breastplate.

And is not a blameless life of itself a defensive armour to the militant soldier? Is there not in his purity of heart, integrity of deportment, faithfulness in all relative duties, that which defies successful assault, and renders him in every trial ultimately a victor? It has been said of one of our most eminent statesmen, that he declared, that after all the conclusive arguments usually furnished in treatises on the evidences of the Christian religion, to his mind the most unanswerable of arguments as to the divine origin

of this religion, was the holy life of its genuine professor. Comparatively easy is it for the infidel to find objections to the faith of the Christian, to cavil and scoff at what he terms its inconsistencies, but hard is it for him to confute the power of a holy life. Here is a preacher whose voice must be heard, whose power cannot fail to be felt.

As with the insincere, so the very principles and conduct of the unrighteous man expose him to assault and danger. With a raiment all tattered, he is exposed to the shafts of every adversary. His conduct but multiplies his enemies. He tramples upon the weak, he is unjust in his dealings, treacherous and wicked in his ways, and having forfeited alike the confidence of himself and of those who know him, he has excited prejudice, been denounced by the virtuous, and gained the enmity of the victims of his wrongs. The devil has already conquered him and rules within him, and stands ready at the appointed time to shut him up in chains and darkness.

How unlike to this the Christian soldier,—meek, upright, blameless, kind, and considerate, faithful in his every calling,—he commands respect even where he is not loved, and by his integrity turns back the shafts which the enemies of his Master and himself would plunge into his bosom. From the fires which may be kindled about him

he comes out purified; and from all his conflicts emerges not only unhurt, but strengthened from the contest, and in uprightness pursues his onward, upward march, safe under the breastplate of his heaven-wrought righteousness.

You have now seen, reader, the believer's breastplate. You have been shown its nature and its protecting power; it is to be hoped you will wear this piece of panoply upon your own bosom, and by your own experience also learn its strength and power. It will shield the very vitals of your spiritual life, and fully and finally thwart the purposes of the evil one for your destruction. Wearing this, his darts will never strike you dead, but however fiery they may be, they shall fall harmless at your feet. I beseech you, therefore, put on and bind close to your bosom the breastplate of this gospel panoply.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE SANDALS OF SERVICE.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

THE panoply of salvation leaves no part of the spiritual man unclad. All the members being regarded as elements of the one body, and each necessary to the vigour and efficiency of the whole man, they are all provided with the means of security, that the Christian soldier may go forth to the war thoroughly equipped.

You will, of course, at once perceive that though the feet are among the more uncomely and dishonoured members, yet it is indispensable to the successful prosecution of the spiritual warfare, that they be so provided for as to fit the soldier to go with fearlessness and agility on his militant way,—even though this should be strewn thick with mire,



snares, and pointed rocks, placed there for his overthrow by his formidable and vigilant adversaries.

The ancient soldier no sooner heard the tocsin of war, than he buckled on afresh his helmet, breastplate and girdle, and his sandals also. Such sandals as he wore were usually made of thick leather spiked on the sole, and to these leaves of brass were often attached for affording protection to the leg. The leather and brass would shield the soldier against the thorns and stones the enemy might have placed in his way; the spikes would prevent him from slipping in the mire; and the general utility of the whole article would appear in the activity and steadiness with which he was enabled to enter the field of strife—his feet being thoroughly shod.

Now, the apostle tells us that in like manner the Christian soldier, in whose ears the clang of the war-trumpet is always ringing, must furnish himself for the conflict by putting on for sandals the preparation of the gospel of peace;—his feet must be always shod, ready for the call to arms.

We understand the figure here used as simply denoting the readiness in which all are, who have entered the armies of the Captain of salvation; for executing his commands. They must not only have the disposition to do his will, but

must have their feet actually shod, in readiness for momentary service.

This readiness to do the will of God is clearly very unlike the spirit of those who are altogether indisposed to do what God requires; and not a few such are there amongst those whose privilege it might be to wear the panoply and fight in the armies of Zion. The call for recruits to these sacramental hosts is continually ringing in the ears of all who dwell in gospel lands. They hear it from the pages of the Bible, from the voice of pious affection in the private walks of life, from the messages of the sanctuary, from the loud calls of Providence, and the gentle whisperings of the Spirit. The rich folds of the banner of the cross are thrown out far and wide, and beneath it every living creature who hears the call is invited to rally.

And yet how few obey this summons! How listless and indifferent the mass of men seem as to the whole cause for which the great contest is going on! How obstinately and daringly do they set at defiance the commands of God! Their language is—"We will not have this man to reign over us." They have no readiness nor desire to do service in the armies of salvation. Their feet are not shod with the preparation of the gospel.

And very unlike, too, are those who are shod with these

spiritual sandals to such as make their religion consist in the great extent and correctness of their religious knowledge. Important as is a thorough acquaintance with the great doctrines of God's word in their dogmatic as well as their practical connections, is it necessary to assure you that there is a difference between knowing God's will and doing it? The influence of the fall has sadly destroyed the power of the understanding over the decisions of the will and the affections; and hence there may be ever so much light in the understanding and still ever so much enmity to God, and determination to resist his commands, in the heart. In fact, the more the light is poured into the mind, until it is regenerated, the more fierce and determined are the manifestations of rebellion against the sovereignty of the Most High. Hence there may be the most thorough acquaintance with systematic and polemic theology, and with the whole polity and order of the visible church in its most scriptural forms, and a willingness to contend, by the carnal weapons of human reason, in their defence to the last, and yet there may be the most utter indisposition to reduce to practice the self-denying principles of the gospel, which have to do with the heart and life. Much easier is it found to be to learn religion with the head than to receive it in the heart; to contend in argument against an errorist,

than to carry on a spiritual warfare against our own darling sins. Much easier is it to give vent to the prejudices and passions of an unsanctified nature in contentions about the outworks of the gospel, than to apply its great truths to the inner man, and seek to curb and conquer every unkind and unholy disposition.

Hence, we say there are those who make their rigid adherence to a correct creed the sum and substance of their godliness. Very far are they from a spirit of humiliation and self-reproach because of sin; very far are they from heart-searching and a sense of unworthiness and weakness; very far from seeking after ardent love and zeal in spiritual things. Such employments they look upon as enthusiastic and fanatical, and altogether beyond their sphere; and very naturally settle themselves down in the mere form of godliness, without any exhibition of its life and power.

Now, all such may make a show of what may seem to be some of the implements of the gospel panoply, but it is only the show of them. Having no disposition to do the will of God, they give indisputable evidence that they are not shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

And I might also mention amongst those who are in like manner unshod, such as seem willing to leave to others all the labours and conflicts which Zion demands. No one

who professedly enlists in the service of Christ would perhaps pretend that he could expect to perform duty here without self-denial; no one would even intimate that the claims of Zion were not strong and urgent, and that her work must not be left undone; and yet are there not multitudes who will take such language on their lips, who never seem, for one moment, to imagine that they have personally either self-denial to practise, or any work to do?

“There was a certain man,” of whom we read in the gospel, “who had two sons, to whom he said, Go work to-day in my vineyard. And one of them said, I go, sir, and went not.” Does not this individual stand forth as a fit representative of a very large class? How many will with great promptitude say, by their profession and words, I go, sir, but yet in practice will never go to the work at all. They admit, indeed, that the vineyard affords a noble field of labour, and that not for the world should the seed be unsown, nor the harvest unreaped and ungathered; and will stand and look with admiration at those engaged in the heat and burden of the day, and sound their praises, and say, that if ever there were good men on earth surely these are such; and yet not one finger will they lift towards helping on the work, and not a thought seems to have entered their minds that with such labour they have



even the most distant connection. They approve of schemes of benevolence, meetings for devotion, and labours of charity amongst the poor and afflicted; and yet they neither give to, nor assist in collecting for, benevolent objects; nor are they ever seen at a prayer-meeting; nor do they go into houses of affliction and want as ministers of mercy, nor can it be discovered that they are actively engaged in any manner whatever about the affairs of Zion. I think, then, you will admit that whatever else such persons may be,—however blameless in their lives,—well instructed and apparently sincere,—whatever other portions of the panoply they may seem to have, they are not yet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

And very nearly allied to such are those who seem to make it a matter of principle to do as little spiritual service as may seem at all compatible with entering heaven.

We take it for granted that the true soldier does not parley as to the amount of duty he is to perform. He is not halting at his enlistment, to reduce the service demanded to the very lowest possible degree; but still are there not many who desire to pass for good soldiers, of whom this course of selfishness and compromise is literally true? Even in the ranks of the stoutest-hearted and best disciplined army, there will be some whose bosoms are not

borne up by the true spirit of daring and devotion;—who are willing to relieve themselves of hardships by pushing them off on others, and whose whole study seems to be to find out some effectual way of securing the spoils of victory with the smallest possible amount of service.

Now, need I remind you that there are some such in the ranks of the church militant, who, so far from having thrown themselves, with the spirit of martyrs, into the war in which Zion is engaged, are willing to have as little share in her struggles and toils as is at all compatible with sharing in her triumphs? Do they ever stand foremost in any enterprise for good? Was it ever heard, that with them originated an attempt of this nature even the most trivial? Have they bestirred themselves, even amidst the successful campaigns of revival seasons, or come to the help of Zion in times of declension and apparent prostration? Or have they been engaged in her benevolent operations, or in the labours of the Sabbath-school, or of the societies where work is to be done for charity? Do they not habitually absent themselves from all occasions where special effort or self-denial is demanded, and excuse themselves so entirely from any participation in the church's labours and conflicts, that they would seem to be little else than mere hangers-on of the camp? Where are their toils? Not in the high-

ways, not in the church, not perhaps even in the religious training of their own families. Where are their struggles? Not in their closets, not in their own bosoms,—for they hardly know what the Scriptures mean when speaking of the spiritual life as a state of warfare. Some may, indeed, say that they have no time for the various methods of doing good by which the church carries on her conquests, but that they wish well to them; but what would you think of that soldier who, when the tocsin of war was sounded and the hosts were drawn up in battle array, should satisfy himself with saying that he wished well to his fellow-soldiers, and sincerely hoped they might win the day, but that for himself, he really had no time for fighting! What leader would not greatly prefer that all such should imitate the example of the “fearful and afraid” in the army of Gideon, and remove from their fellow-soldiers the disheartening effect of their example by returning to their homes? Surely, with such there is no readiness to do the will of God,—they are not shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE SANDALS OF SERVICE.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

A READINESS to do the will of God, is an inseparable part of the genuine Christian character. Indolence is a thing for which no provision has been made in the armies of salvation. Unprofitable servants are to be cast into outer darkness and not to be marched into the realms of light and glory. He who enlists in the warfare must be ready for the march, and he who joins not the soldiery when they go forth to battle and to conquest, is not a true follower, but a traitor in the camp.

It has never once entered the mind of the thoroughly mailed warrior that a soldier's life is a life of ease. At his enlistment he did not presume that he was to feed on

dainties, repose on beds of down, drink to satiety from cool, refreshing fountains, or dwell where his slumbers would not be disturbed by the signal of alarm, and where he should never be called to contend in the heat of battle, or have his garments drenched in blood. At the outset he was well aware that hardship was to be a part of his lot. He knew that he was to pitch his tent in an enemy's country; that he was often to fare roughly; that long and dreary nights he must walk the sentinel's rounds; that the noise and tumult of battle, and tedious marches with all the privations of camp-life, were to be to him familiar things.

Hence it will not seem strange that being shod with this preparation of the gospel, he should endure hardness when it comes; that in the long and forced marches he should be among the most patient and untiring; that he should go out in the dark and stormy night and with sleepless vigilance watch at the sentry's post; or that if there should come a call for volunteers to scale some fortress of extreme peril, or attempt some enterprise of special daring, he should answer the summons, and stand forth ready to do his part. None of these things move him, for it was to encounter just such things as these he had at the outset buckled his armour on.

The Christian soldier has, from the first, considered that



language of his Master, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." He has seen before him all the toils and hardships of this life of warfare, and only hoped for rest when the march should have been for ever ended, and his armour laid aside, amid the scenes of eternal victory; and hence he has been ever ready to hear the voice of his divine leader, and to the utmost of that power which grace imparts to do that leader's will. He is shod with the sandals of the gospel.

And let me ask, is not this readiness to do the will of God enforced upon us by the very nature of the service in which we professed to have embarked? Does not every soldier of the cross profess to have esteemed the cause of Christ paramount to every other interest? And if this cause be paramount to all others, then how can it be that this chiefest thing in the heart should call forth no service in the life? "He that loveth me," says the Master, "keepeth my commandments." You love your husband, wife, father, child, and it is esteemed no hardship to deny yourself that you may minister to their wishes. You are bound to others by the endearing ties of friendship, and if their reputation, health or prosperity be endangered, you cheerfully render what relief may lie within your power. How comes it, then, that if you supremely love the cause

of your Lord and Master, you should not be ready also for him to sacrifice ease, comfort, property, or whatever else may be requisite in order to obey his will, defend his honour, and promote the advancement of his kingdom in the world? According to the immutable laws of your nature, then either the espousal of Christ cannot be sincere, or your feet will be ready to do his will. The very spirit and nature of the service involves the putting on of the sandals.

A diligent and energetic engagedness in doing the will of the Master is also matter of express command. So important a duty as this is not left for the soldier to discover by the deductions of philosophy. He whose word the militant hosts may not refuse to regard, has issued the mandate to every individual follower—"Go work to-day"—"Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"—"Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"—"Work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work"—"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life"—"Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Nor is his displeasure with those who neglect to do his will concealed. In the view given by the inspired penman of the judgment scene at the last day, the hapless culprit stands before the bar condemned on

an indictment for not doing the will of his Master,—“Inasmuch as ye did it not ;” and “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness,” is the appalling fiat which the dread tribunal at last issues in regard to him who has had no readiness for service in the spiritual kingdom.

Now, you could not for a moment imagine that these explicit orders from Him, whose soldier you profess to be, could pass unheeded, unless under the certainty of incurring the divine displeasure, and forfeiting your character for faithfulness in the spiritual calling. Disobedience to orders is no trivial offence in martial life. He who neglects to carry out the commands of his superior may look for the court-martial, the arrest, and the cashiering; and happy may he count himself if he escape the law’s utmost penalty—the deadly death-shot.

And think you this greatest of all captains, the Captain of Israel’s spiritual hosts, can suffer a wilful and deliberate trampling under foot of his divine orders? Can he, without sore displeasure, look upon the idler in the camp, the loiterer in the ranks, the man who, though wearing the vesture outwardly of a soldier, has none of the soldier’s brave, sturdy heart, nor his readiness to endure the hardships of the march? Can he, with honour to himself, or with safety to the well-ordering of the army, permit this open and fla-

grant dereliction of duty? Rely upon it, reader, if you have taken upon yourself the soldier's name, and desire not the displeasure of your Master, you must take heed to his orders; and by working while the day of life lasts, showing diligence in business, and fervency of spirit in the service of the Lord, evince that you are neither barren nor unfruitful, that you are not a loiterer, or a rebel, but a free and willing servant,—that your feet are shod with the sandals of the gospel.

And to this readiness to do the will of the Master, are you also urged by the examples both of himself and of his faithful followers. As one of the features of the incarnation, our glorious leader became subject to the same behests which come to us,—he “was made under the law.” Having assumed our place, he admitted the obligation to render an obedience in our behalf,—so that there is no service to which we are called, which, in substance, the Master himself has not already performed; and just as the common soldier, remarkable for his fidelity and for all the highest qualities of his calling, when he afterwards rises to be the chief commander, still leaves in his life of obedience as a common soldier, a lesson and a pattern to others,—so has this now glorified leader of the hosts, who holds in his right hand the stars and treads under his feet

the clouds, left in the example of his humble, faithful, fearless obedience, a lesson and a pattern to all who profess to come after him. "I must be about my Father's business," was the language which fell from his lips in boyhood, and "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do," was the language of the expiring hours of his soon to be extinguished manhood. Between that boyhood's purpose and that manhood's announcement of a work accomplished, were crowded days of temptation, weariness, care, labour, reviling,—long nights of prayer and tears, three years of unceasing tumult and persecution, and the enduring in advance of the last acts of the great tragedy which awaited him. Incarnate God though he was, he did not throw himself upon the majesty of his divine nature, leaving far beneath him all susceptibility of hardship or of pain; but endured the shame, struggled on amidst toil and sorrow, and thus left a perpetual example to all who might profess to be his followers, as to how they ought to walk.

Some have there been, as we rejoice to believe, who have been ever ready, in a measure, like the Master, to say, "I must be about my Father's business;"—some who, when busied at the receipt of custom, or mending the nets with which they have vainly tried to fish up from this world wherewith to satisfy the soul,—have been willing, at



the call of the Master, to leave the custom-house, the market-place, and the mending of the nets, and follow the footsteps divine, even though these might lead to conflict, toil, and sorrow,—to bonds, imprisonment, and death. Some there have been whose feet seemed never weary, day nor night, in bearing abroad the banner of the cross, in calling for recruits, making onsets upon the ramparts of the devil, and pushing forward the triumphs of salvation.

Hear the great apostle of the Gentiles as he recounts some of the events of his own spiritual warfare:—"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Turn then, reader, from this amazing catalogue of human exposure, peril, and endurance, and see others whose record is not written with the pen of inspiration;

see humble, faithful saints serving God amidst the fiery storms of the ten great persecutions which fell upon the youthful Christian church,—serving the Master until that service was brought to a sudden end, that their poor bodies might be sawn asunder, thrown to wild beasts, or first smeared with pitch, then set on fire to illuminate the gardens of a pagan tyrant. See, also, the martyrs of the more modern days of the church,—the long retinue from the humble proto-martyr, John Rodgers, up to the noble-blooded and noble-spirited Earl of Argyle, steadfastly continuing their march until it led them to the stake or to the bloody block. See, even in your own day, what other Christians have done, and are doing,—the faithful missionary sent by the great chief commander to some dark and desolate shore where Satan long has swayed his sceptre undisturbed, there to throw up the ramparts of the gospel, and storm the fortress of the devil,—to toil there alone, to fight there alone, to die there alone. Or see the man of God, with the wife of his youth, going far into western forests, and, amid the privations of wild-woods pioneer life, preaching, praying, toiling, and enduring, that the glorious gospel may keep pace with the ever swelling human tide which sweeps on deeper into the wilderness. Or see the humble and almost unknown soldier in the camp at home, busy in

teaching the children of the household the ways of salvation, labouring in the Sabbath-school, going into the lanes and alleys to find out and minister to the poor, shedding tears with the afflicted, and offering prayers with those who are seeking the way to the cross.

Are there not here, then, feet shod with the preparation of the gospel,—from the Master down to the humble labourer of the lanes and the Sabbath-school? Tell me also if this cause in which they have so toiled and suffered is not that in which you also are professedly enlisted? Have you like them the spirit of deep, undying devotion,—of ready and constant service? Why should you not evince the same devotion, and show the same obedience?

“ Must you be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fight to win the prize,  
And sail through bloody seas ?”

O ye lounging, loitering soldiers, awake from your slumbers! why stand ye here all the day idle? Let the spectacle of what others of like passions, difficulties, and trials with yourself have done and endured, inspire your heart with desires to imitate their example; and especially

let the spectacle of the labours and services of your glorious leader stimulate you to greater diligence and zeal. Be followers of them who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises, and you will then like them have trodden an ever onward march, shod with the sandals of the gospel.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE SANDALS OF SERVICE.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

FROM what has been already stated, it is obvious that without a disposition to do the will of God you can have no satisfactory evidence that you are engaged in the Christian warfare. “By their fruits,” says Christ, “shall ye know them;” and the fruits of a sincere devotion, as you have seen, must be a life of obedience, as well as a heart in unison with that of the Master. If you are a soldier in the armies of salvation, your spirit will accord with that of him whose footsteps you profess to follow; his will will be yours; his cause will be your cause; with his designs for the welfare of mankind, the upbuilding of his kingdom, and the glory of his name, you will be thoroughly identified,



so that when there is work to be done you will not be reluctant to stand in your place and bear your part.

Without such a oneness with the Master and the cause, it is vain for you to call yourself a Christian. In what does your religion consist? In an outwardly correct deportment? in an attendance on the services of the sanctuary on the Sabbath? in an occasional subscription or petty contribution to objects of benevolence? Do not even the publicans and sinners the same? How many who make no profession such as yours are quite as correct in their morals, as regularly in the house of God, and as liberal to objects of benevolence as yourself. Wherein, then, are ye better than they? Or does your religion also include the form of prayer in the closet and the family, the occasional reading of the Scriptures, and the sitting down at the Lord's table? Do not even the hypocrites the same? In observances similar to these, and far more numerous and burdensome, the Pharisees far exceeded you, and yet the Saviour has declared that "except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." "If any man serve me," says the same divine authority, "let him follow me;" and if in an humble, faithful, constant study to do the Father's will, you are not following this great exemplar, I ask again,

wherein consists your piety? What would be thought of that man enlisted in an army raised especially for actual warfare, who, whilst the trumpet was sounding, and his fellow-soldiers were taking their places in the ranks, or striving hard amidst the storm of battle, should remain all the while in his tent, heedless of the trumpet's clang, or of the speedy response to it of his fellow-soldiers, and of the trying times when it was expected of every man to be found at his post? If the entire army were made up of such material, where would be its conflicts and its victories,—its services to the cause for which it was enlisted,—its aggressions upon the enemy's country? Rely upon it, reader, if, when the call to arms is always ringing in your ears, when your fellow-Christians are girding on their panoply afresh, and doing battle valiantly against the hosts of darkness, you are not also at your post,—whatever may be your outward garb of soldiership, or the name you bear, or your profession of enlistment,—in the essential elements which make up the soldier you are found wanting. You are not shod with the sandals of the gospel.

The extent and importance of the work to be done, also, shows the necessity of wearing the gospel sandals. Mighty as have been the purposes and achievements of other armies, there are none which, in the magnitude of the

interests involved, the extent of the territory over which the work is spread, the lasting consequences which may ensue, and the difficulties to be encountered, will at all compare with that for which the Captain of salvation has mustered his militant hosts. The end to be obtained in general is the victory of the world; but a victory of the world far higher and more important than Alexander or Cæsar ever knew. As regards things temporal merely, the triumphs of the armies of light are the triumphs of civilization over barbarism, of natural affection over inhumanity, of liberty over despotism, of intelligence over superstition and ignorance,—for “godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is,” as well as “of that which is to come.”

It has been said that wherever the Anglo-Saxon has planted his foot, he has there also planted the elements of light, liberty, industry and prosperity; but the gospel has made the Anglo-Saxon what he is; and where the gospel plants its standard, there also are found these and all other blessings which make human pursuits, family ties, and social and civil relations, things to be desired. So that if the success of Christ's cause in the world involved nothing beyond the bounds of time, this should be reason enough for all the service of every soldier enlisted in Christ's cause

—that he should know that the triumphs of this kingdom were the triumphs of all that is dear to our common humanity.

But well do you know, that glorious as would be a crusade whose onward march should thus be attended with the uplifting of fallen humanity, the breaking of fetters, and the disenthralment of our race; this,—glorious though it would be,—would be trifling compared with the immeasurably greater achievements which attend the successful progress of the armies of Zion. The gospel regards man chiefly as spiritual and immortal. It looks upon him as in a state of alienation from God, of bondage to sin and Satan; as a prisoner walking in chains to the gloomy realms of unending sorrow and despair; and to secure his release from captivity, his rescue from an immortality so appalling, his restoration to son-ship in the family divine, his eternal partnership in the dwelling-place of God—it is at this holiest, highest of all achievements that the gospel aims. For a conquest of the world such as this it is that our great leader has enlisted recruits, marshaled them under strict discipline, required of them hard service, and gone himself in advance all through the storm of battle and the pains of the death-struggle.

“The world lieth in wickedness” is a truth of awful import—a truth which should possess the heart of every true



follower of Christ, and fire his zeal to deeds of daring. If the fact that infidel feet were treading the soil which had been hallowed by the footsteps of the Saviour and his apostles, once awoke the energies of slumbering nations, until man, woman and child, under one great common impulse, bade farewell to home and country, and marched in millions through hunger, thirst, flood, pestilence, and the whetted swords of resistant foes, for the rescue of the land of the cross; how think you should the fact that this wide world, which has been promised to the Saviour for his inheritance, has long been and is now under the rule of his bitterest foe, so that the world still lies in wickedness,—how should an appeal such as this arouse the dormant energies of the militant church, and call every man to his post with the spirit to endure all hardships and sufferings, if need be, for its rescue from the sway of the prince of darkness, for its restoration to him to whom it of right belongs? O soldier of the cross! if there be not in your bosom a heart which can be stirred to holy indignation, to quenchless zeal, to tireless labours, to deeds of daring, by a spectacle such as this, you are strangely devoid of those sensibilities which your high calling demands. How long shall the enemy triumph? How long shall whole nations of mankind dwell under the night of the shadow of death? How long shall



millions continue in their thralldom without ever having heard of the way of deliverance? How long, even in those lands nominally possessed, shall the kingdom of Christ still but barely maintain its acquired strength, and the powers of darkness remain fortified in their strongholds? How long shall the strong men continue to perish within sight of the cross, and the children rise up to fill the broken ranks of their fathers, but to follow their footsteps, and finally share their ruin?

Surely it is time the church were attempting greater things for her glorious Lord. It is time that all who name the name of Jesus were up and doing for his cause. Surely it is time that every soldier should be ever ready for the call to duty; that he should be thoroughly shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Let me, however, urge another and a kindred consideration why you should be shod with the sandals of service, from the fact that whilst there is so much to be done, there are so few to do the work. The army of salvation has always been a "little flock." Many have been called to enlist under the banners of the cross, but few have been chosen. The vast proportion of mankind have always been arrayed with the prince of darkness. When your leader was on earth himself, and with his mild and gentle voice

calling for recruits, how small the number who stood forth to do his bidding! In the centuries that have since swept on, how often have the militant forces been but as scattered sheep, trodden down by oppression, driven into the wilderness,—their name, their cause, and their Master alike unhonoured and despised. And now that eighteen hundred years have passed, and all the while the battle has been waging, and the call for recruits has been sounding, still how little is the flock compared with what it should be, compared with the mighty hosts to which it is opposed, compared with the great work which as at first still remains to be done. One from a family, a few from a neighbourhood, some hundreds of thousands from a nation of millions, what are these compared with what the mightiness of the enterprise, and the interests to be secured, demand!

Painful it is, amidst this mighty call, to witness so few coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty; but more painful still to witness those whose profession and enlistment give the Master a right to claim their services, still lingering with the opposing world, letting their armour rust for want of use, and laying aside their sandals because they have no errands of danger to render them necessary. If, when your country is invaded, and the foreign foe is treading your soil, garrisoned in your cities, laying waste

your agriculture and commerce, and burning the houses over the affrighted heads of your helpless wives and children, you should be called traitor and coward, because you girded not on your sword, and stood not up for your country and your fireside,—by what epithet shall you be called if, when this foe to your race, to your own soul, to the church of God, and to your espoused Lord is planting his deadly footsteps everywhere, withering the heart's joys, blasting the hopes, and sweeping into relentless ruin undying souls, you are still found folding your hands to sleep, praying to be excused, and devolving on others the service which belongs to yourself,—if, when there are so few to stand up against the too successful foe, you, who profess to be one of the few, should have deserted your place in the ranks! Arise, Christian, from this scene of indifference and inaction, seek the field of battle and strike for your glorious leader's cause, and for the souls of men;—put on the gospel sandals and be ready for every good word and work.

This duty of putting on the sandals, is urged further by the great number and variety of departments in which we may do service for our Lord and Master. Some there may be, indeed, amongst the professed soldiery who will be ever framing excuses for a life of indolence and ease;

who will always be willing to see others do the work and brave the danger, whilst they stand all the day idle, under the old plea, that as for them, they have no "turn" for doing such work as this. If you have "no turn" for such service, why then did you ostensibly enlist beneath Christ's banner, assume his name, and profess to be among his soldiery? What, I ask, would you think of that soldier who, when the troops were marched to battle, would sit quietly in his tent, not stirring a foot or lifting a hand, in the hour which called for every man to be at his post, under the plea that as for him he had no turn for marching or for fighting? Was it not the very object for which he was enlisted, that he might do this service for which he pleads he has "no turn?"

Rely upon it, reader, excuses such as this will not avail. You may not be gifted with those talents which will qualify you for the more prominent places among the militant hosts. You may not have the requisite attainments, nor the power of utterance to fit you to stand up as a preacher of the cross, but in some humbler sphere there is a place where you may do your work just as efficiently as if with lips of eloquence you were pleading with listening auditors to lay down their weapons of rebellion and join the service of the Saviour;—that

place too, if you have the right spirit, you will not fail to find.

May you not bear some minor office in the ranks, and, ruling in the house of God, or serving tables, efficiently aid the common cause? Or may you not go out amongst those who visit the widow and the fatherless, who minister to the sick, or with kind words comfort the mourner amidst his sorrows? "Sisters of Charity," so-called, there are in the service of "the man of sin," who do much of this work of mercy, and whose diligence and watchings tend to win many to their favour; and though we may not, and should not, have these organized sisterhoods, why should we not at least strive with equal ardour in such labours of love, and show what a purer faith can do, by all of us becoming a band of brothers and sisters to minister to the wants of the destitute, sick, and sorrowing? Or, may you not serve your Master by instructing the youth assembled in the Sabbath-school, striving thus to bend the twig before it has become a tree, and to raise up a generation which shall better know and serve the Lord than those who have gone before them? Can you not be in your place in the prayer-meeting, encouraging others by your presence, and with them imploring the grace so much needed for all? Can you not in your business so serve God, as that a large



portion of its gains shall be set apart for his kingdom? Can you not at least so humbly, constantly, and consistently maintain a holy life, that your very example shall be a powerful instrument for good? If not in one way, in another then you can find some means of doing the will of him who has called you; and whilst there are wide open so many avenues of usefulness, you can have no excuse for not using always the gospel's sandals.

One other argument shall we adduce to urge you to a readiness to every good word and work, and this is, the blessed results of such employments to yourself personally. You have heard of the luxury of doing good, if you have not been a partaker of this bliss. A luxury, indeed, there is in ministering to the wants, temporal and spiritual, of our fellow-men,—a luxury purer and more divine than any earth can give,—a luxury which none but he who feels it knows. The ways the Christian soldier treads, although in one sense dark and thorny, in another are “ways of pleasantness and peace.” “He that watereth shall himself be watered,” is a truth to whose verity there have been many witnesses. It is an appointment of God, that if any man leave father, mother, houses, or lands, for his sake, he shall have an hundred-fold even in this world. He shall experience an approval of conscience, an inward peace, a

sense of the favour of God, which will open up to him fountains of refreshment far purer and sweeter than can be found in the stagnant pools of this desert world.

Then, when the faithful soldier approaches the closing scenes of his warfare, is there nothing to be desired in that retrospect which is furnished by a life spent in doing good? When treading the shores of that "vast ocean he must sail so soon," how full of consolation the thought that by the grace which has been given him, his sojourn upon earth has not been altogether in vain; that he has at least done something for the cause of him who called him from darkness to light, and in whose presence he must appear so soon,—that he has done something for the welfare of those immortal spirits he is ere long to meet again before the judgment bar, and in the eternal world. Who has not been constrained to say, as he has stood by the bedside of the expiring Christian soldier, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?"

And when the conflict is at last ended, and the work done, how rich the rewards of grace within the veil! "As a man soweth, so also shall he reap." Having sown bountifully, how glorious shall be the harvest of the faithful, when their sheaves shall be gathered to the garners above. "And I heard a voice saying unto me, write, Blessed are

the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Their works do follow them! When the warrior has laid aside his armour, his works on the battle-field are still living. What he has accomplished survives his departure, and still does the work of his Master; and these works in due season and from time to time follow him whither he has gone, to enrich his reward and shine in his heavenly crown. O reader! would you have a starless crown? or would you not rather choose one which shall be jewelled with such gems as will outvie the sun in lustre, and shine for ever on when the sun shall shed his rays no more? With considerations such as these we close the catalogue of arguments for being shod with the preparation of the gospel.

In conclusion, you will observe, that though the girding on of these sandals may have a hostile aspect, yet the object for which the Christian soldier is shod, is actually peaceful. The material of his sandals is the gospel of "peace."

True, indeed, peace may not be in every respect the immediate effect of his spiritual campaigns; for no sooner does he gird on his armour, than this very circumstance excites against him the hostility of those who are yet

under the banner of the prince of darkness. Hence, saith Christ, "I am not come to send peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

But notwithstanding all this, it is true that the gospel-shod warrior does, by the grace of God, in many respects "conquer a peace." As his warfare is eminently and primarily against the evils which lie within himself, so it is within himself that a large portion of these peaceful spoils are won. Envy, hatred, pride, covetousness, and lust, are enemies which have their residence within the caverns of his own soul; and as long as they are enabled to come forth in their strength, and walk harmless on that field, so long will genuine peace be a stranger to his bosom. But when, by God's grace, he has marched forth against them, and met them undismayed, he is enabled to drive them from their positions, and perhaps to set his iron-shod feet upon them; and as the warfare is continued, they grow weaker, until at last he has gotten them under his dominion; and

these disturbers of his quiet being subdued, his soul enjoys a spiritual tranquillity. Anger, pride, envy, lust, and covetousness being bound in chains, they cannot now so much disturb the warrior's bosom. And as in all this warfare he has shown a readiness to do the will of God, so conscience is satisfied, and her approval contributes to his peace; and as all his strength is stayed on the meritorious intervention of the Captain of Salvation in his behalf, so also he has peace with God.

Then, as regards the world at large, the tendency of his warfare is pacific; for just in proportion as the cause in which he is enlisted advances successfully, just so also are implanted and established principles of righteousness, forbearance under injuries, and readiness to do good to all, which, if universally adopted, would bring about a reign of peace throughout the whole family of man. Brother should no more be arrayed against brother, and the nations should learn war no more. So that, though his front may wear a hostile aspect and though his feet are ever heavily mailed for battle, yet in the end it will appear that he has been shod with the preparation of a peaceful gospel.

Just in proportion, too, as the army of salvation fills up, and its conquests are extended, just in that proportion will that which, in its main tendency, is so eminently pacific



towards mankind, prevail; until at last, when the Christian soldiery have set their feet on every shore, and amongst every people there have been reared the strong spiritual fortresses of the gospel, Satan and his allies shall have been driven back foot by foot, until they have been banished to their own realms of night, to be confined in chains for a thousand years;—and as through all the wide circuit of the earth, the armies of salvation shall stand without any other foe than death to conquer, the whole world shall be filled with heavenly peace.

Now, as we have heretofore urged upon you the importance of buckling on the girdle of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness, let me ask you if you will not add to these pieces of panoply, also the spiritual sandals? Will you not have your feet shod with the peaceful preparation of the gospel, and thus be made ready for every good word and work? Have you no desire to enter the field for your glorious leader, and to walk there in the certainty of ultimate safety and final triumph?

Never was there a time when ready, willing feet were more needed in the church; never a time when the indolent and inefficient could be less acceptable. In this age of action, with such multiplied means of doing efficient service for the Captain of Salvation made ready

to your hands, will you still be a mere hanger-on of the camp, although professing to belong to its soldiery? Will you stand idly by and be a mere spectator of those whose willing feet are bearing them into every field of toil and conflict? or will you not rather seek afresh to be shod with the gospel sandals, and as you hope to enjoy the spoils of victory, be ready also to partake of the hardships and the dangers of the warfare?

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

THAT piece of the panoply now brought to view is of special importance, as the apostle's language would seem to designate. “Above all” the shield must be secured, whatever other part might be neglected. Not that the apostle means in any manner to disparage other portions of the panoply. Each piece of armour is not only possessed of peculiar qualities for its own appropriate place, but all are necessary in order to the completeness of the whole.

Still, though the girdle, the breastplate, the sandals, the helmet, and the sword, may neither be dispensed with entirely, nor their places supplied by any substitute whatever, some one piece of the panoply may be endowed with

a pre-eminence over the rest, because of its peculiar relations to all of them, and to the entire Christian man.

Now, it is this position we understand the apostle as assigning to the shield of faith. There are special reasons for its pre-eminence, which lead him to enjoin it upon the soldier of the cross, "above all" to put on this piece of armour.

For, first, faith may be called an elementary grace of the Christian character. It is that act of the mind by which we are enlisted into the army of salvation. "He that believeth shall be saved." Wanting this we cannot be accepted, "for without faith it is impossible to please God." "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The sonship in the spiritual family is also bestowed upon them that believe. Now, if by faith we are saved, we please God, we approach him with acceptance, we are adopted as his children, we need not wonder at the language of the apostle when he says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith."

Faith, also, must be taken "above all," because it affords nutriment and strength to all other graces. It is the connecting link between the soldier and his divine Master; it is the bond of union between the vine and the

branches, through which is supplied that vital influence by which fruit is produced and matured. Without faith we cannot sincerely and cordially espouse the cause of Christ, nor lay hold on his righteousness, nor engage diligently in his service, nor hope for spiritual good here and hereafter, nor wield the sword of the word in doing battle for the kingdom. These graces, too, often languish. In the evil day of the conflict, when temptation, depression, and affliction abound, hope sometimes grows dim, the feet are slow to run in paths of obedience, the fruits of righteousness are few, and but feebly is the sword wielded; the evidence of the existence of these graces seems almost to have passed away. Then is it that faith must again enter the storehouse of the Lord, and, taking hold afresh of the promises, bring out the material by which the strength and energy of the entire man is to be revived. As a ministering spirit to the whole family of which she is a member, she ever stands ready to do her associates service by furnishing such supplies of grace as they may need. "He that believes, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters." The man who diligently and truly exercises this grace shall have that flow and increase of all other graces which is here called "living waters."

Or if in evil days of despondency the evidences of his adop-



tion have departed from the soul, how faith brings back the glad news again of a state of acceptance with Christ. When the power of temptation has been strong, and the clouds of sin have shut out the light of the Saviour's countenance, and the poor, desponding saint sits down and asks himself, Can I have been born again? am I entitled to be called a child of God? is it possible that one so often erring, doing so little for the Saviour's cause, with so many evil imaginations, and so few holy aspirations, can be numbered amongst those whose names are written in heaven?—then it is that faith comes to do her welcome office, showing the disheartened believer that though his sins be as scarlet, they can be made white as snow; that though they be red like crimson, they can be made white like wool,—that if he will but with an humble spirit approach the mercy-seat, all shall be forgiven, and a voice divine shall whisper to his spirit, “Go in peace.” Then will faith betake herself again to the exceeding great and precious promises, and set them in such array in all their fullness and freeness, that the believer who looks upon them cannot but see their suitability to his own cause. He is led to cry out even from the borders of despair, “Lord, I believe, O help my unbelief;” or to turn upon himself, and chiding his treacherous spirit which dares to despond amidst such rich promises for com-

fort, to adopt the words of the Psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

Faith is also a grace which, "above all," greatly honours God. It is that which leads the soul to forsake every other reliance, and rest solely upon the divine arm as its helper. It separates us from earthly good, it removes us from the broken reeds which pierce us, it perceives the promise afar off, and when there is no evidence of its fulfilment which can be discerned by sense, or when help seems far away, and the odds greatly against us, leans just as firmly upon the written word, and believes just as fully that though the vision may tarry it will yet come, that though the good Samaritan may not at once show himself, he will yet appear, as if the vision were already revealed in its accomplishment, and the good Samaritan were just beside us speaking words of kindness, and pouring the balm of Gilead into the bleeding wounds.

For these and other reasons which will appear when we come more fully to examine the offices of the shield of faith, we may readily see why the apostle tells us, "above all," to take this piece of the armour.

The shield is an implement without which no ancient

soldier would have been regarded as properly arrayed for battle. The ancient shields were usually made of wood, covered with brass or some other metal. In rare instances they were entirely of brass, or even of gold, as were those of Solomon. Of the shield there were two varieties,—one a smaller and lighter article which could be easily handled, so as to protect any part of the person. This description was commonly used by cavalry. The other was so large as effectually to conceal the soldier. It formed a complete protection, was generally in use amongst foot-soldiers, and from this the imagery of the apostle is undoubtedly derived.

This metallic shield could defy the “fiery darts,” or arrows, which, taking fire in their flight, would pierce and consume a mere wooden fabric. A material incombustible and indestructible by such darts was indispensable to safety. The warrior whose shield was of brass could stand where the blazing storm was falling thickest, and advance to the assault fearless of harm.

Be assured, reader, that in the provisions of grace there is offered to you a shield impenetrable and imperishable, one which can be borne everywhere in your march, which will cover all your panoply and yourself, affording complete protection against the showers of fiery darts hurled at you either from this or the unseen world. This

implement is furnished in that grace to which the apostle assigns a position "above all" others,—it is the shield of faith.

The shield of faith is, of course, the reverse of the shelter of infidelity, to which some men have recourse for refuge.

We now use the term "infidelity" in its broad sense of a disbelief of the Christian system of truth; for, as you are well aware, there are those who, with apparent sincerity, profess to regard the religion of Christ as a cunningly devised fable. All testimony as to the divine character of the word of God they reject, and neither credit its revelations, nor even, in some cases, believe that there ever lived such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, and under this wide refuge of infidelity profess to regard themselves as secure.

Such skeptics do not indeed pretend that they are thus guarded against temptation and sin, for they look upon temptations but as the reasonable demands of propensities which are natural to all, and which it is quite proper should be indulged, provided such indulgence does not obviously and seriously interfere with the body physical, social or politic. And since they deny the validity of the law of God, (and where there is no law there can be no transgression,) they acknowledge no such thing as sin in the evan-

gical sense of that term. If the skeptic sincerely receives his own doctrines, if he believes that there is no place of future punishment, no prince of darkness to do him mischief, nor any such thing as a message from God to man, revealing a law and denouncing wrath against transgressors, then of course he can have no ground for fear from powers satanic or divine.

Hence there are those, boasting of their attainments in the wisdom of this world, who have avowedly bid defiance to all such evils as those from which the Christian panoply is designed as a protection; who have cast off all fear of God and concern for a future state; who live as they list, having taken refuge under this pretended shield of skepticism.

It would be beyond our present purpose to pause here, in order to expose the futility of such a subterfuge; sufficient is it to say that inasmuch as the testimony in support of Christianity is the most varied and conclusive, as it has satisfied multitudes of the most enlightened, cautious, and discriminating, and as the position of the skeptic must fail to satisfy any candid and persevering inquirer after truth, the shield under which the infidel has taken refuge must prove unavailing,—the fiery darts of the adversary will easily penetrate its fragile fabric, and both his armour and himself be consumed.



Did the theme and the circumstances require it, how we could open the doors of the sick-chamber and look in upon the bold blasphemer and skeptic stretched upon his dying couch, without God and without hope, a prey to his own conscience, and a prey to the great adversary, just awaiting the approach of an eternal captivity.

There is also a practical unbelief which leaves its possessor equally exposed, if not equally deluded. The number of avowed infidels may now be less, perhaps, than in some former periods, although under the new guises which infidelity has assumed there are not a few skeptics who are not known as such.

A much larger class than that of which we have been speaking, is found in those whose infidelity is chiefly practical. Such unbelievers do not deny the truth of the Bible, nor the evangelical meaning of the doctrines which it teaches. Theoretically they stand on the same ground with the believer—they admit everything. But whilst in theory they hold the truth, in practice they deny it. The great tenets of revelation have no controlling effect upon their hearts and lives. Death, judgment, heaven and hell, the favour of God, the salvation of the soul by the merits of a crucified Redeemer—these their lips confess to be of momentous import, but the language of the lips is

denied by the conduct of the life. Does their faith in these truths deter them from sin and lead to a sincere seeking after peace with God, and an eternal state of blessedness beyond the tomb? Or are they not so utterly reckless and indifferent to their immortal interests, that neither the most awful threatenings, nor the most enchanting promises, make the thousandth part the impression upon them as the most trifling danger to their person or property, or the most petty prospect of earthly gain or pleasure?

Ministers preach God's word with clearness and power, and the hearers admit that all these things are so, and yet who among the multitudes that hear pretend to do them? Were these same hearers on a sick-bed extremely ill, and did the physician insist on a speedy resort to certain remedies as the only hope for arresting the waning current of life, how instantly would the remedy be taken, no matter how revolting or painful; but when assured, on authority that cannot be disputed, that they are the subjects of a mortal malady, that everlasting death is staring them in the face, and that without a resort to the great Physician of souls there can be no hope for recovery,—they say this is all true, and these things should by all means be attended to, but at the same time manifest no concern whatever either as to the danger or the remedy.

Now, this we call practical infidelity. Of what avail is it that such persons professedly receive the truth, when that truth is to them a dead letter? As to any beneficial results, might there not as well have been no revelation? Theirs is a mere speculative credence,—a faith without works, which, being dead, cannot avail. To all practical purposes they stand on the same ground with the open infidel. They have possessed themselves of some sort of belief, but not being vital and effective, it is not that faith which is the shield of the Christian warrior.

Nor will a mere temporary and transient faith subserve the purpose of an availing shield for the soldier of the cross. Times there are with almost all hearers of the word when its solemn truths are not regarded with that entire indifference which usually prevails. There will be occasions when the truth, however unwelcome, will come home to the spirit, and show that its claims cannot be lightly disregarded. A week upon a sick-bed, very near the borders of eternity; a household where are going up lamentations and woe, because of one of whom they have been bereaved; a revival of religion, in which young companions and partners of our blood are forsaking the ways of sin to follow the Saviour; or the still small voice of the Spirit whispering within the bosom—these, or similar causes, have much to do with im-

pressing on the careless heart the folly and danger of neglecting the great salvation. Often do such impressions seem by no means in vain; and from the sick-chamber, the scenes of woe, the revival of religion, the inward workings of the Spirit, the once thoughtless man may come out, apparently under the absorbing power of things divine,—sedate, thoughtful, devotional, zealous in every good word and work,—to all human observation a changed man.

Nor is this apparent change by any means always, or even most frequently, deceptive. Such providences and gracious agencies are the instrumentalities by which God is constantly converting souls to himself. But whilst with some such impressions are radical and permanent, with others they are but spurious and transient. Like the morning cloud, or the early dew, which, however they may expand and sparkle at the rising dawn, melt at once away before the footsteps of the monarch of the day; so these exercises may be sometimes lively, and give promise of much future good at the outset, but when the time of trial comes they all pass away never to return.

This temporary faith embraces, while it lasts, something more than the cold assent of the understanding to the truth. It seems to take hold of eternal things as realities, and produces a most obvious and powerful effect on the whole

character ; so that even had the possessor availed himself of the evangelical faith of the believer, it would be scarcely possible that he should show more outward evidence of devotion to Christ than at present. He seems cordially to approve the truth, he apparently has much joy in receiving and hearing it ; but, alas ! this faith must be the result of some mere worldly causes, for it endures only for a time, and soon passes away.

Of this nature were the stony-ground hearers, of whom our Saviour speaks in the parable of the sower. They received the word with joy ; they seemed to understand it, assented to it, heard it gladly, considered and approved of it ; and it sprang up in an outward reformation and profession. Yet they had not root in themselves, but endured only for a while,—they wanted the soil of a sincere heart and true affections, of firm and fixed resolutions, and principles of grace,—of a deep and abiding faith. They had some purposes to pursue the more excellent way, but these were overpowered by unmortified corruptions and the strength of temptation, so that when tribulation or persecution came they were offended,—they stumbled and fell off from their former religious profession.

A very striking and most affecting description of this same temporary and superficial faith, is given by the apostle



in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The persons there spoken of seem to have been the nearest possible approximation to the genuine believer; and yet their views, clear as they were, and their emotions, powerful as they were, like those of the stony-ground hearers, but endured for a while. These persons were “once enlightened,” so as to take clear and affecting views of divine truth; they once “tasted of the heavenly gift,”—had some sweet apprehensions of the suitableness and loveliness of Christ; they “were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,”—shared the powerful influences of the blessed Spirit; and “tasted the good word of God,”—the preciousness of the promises,—“and the powers of the world to come,”—had some realizing view of the momentous things of eternity; but, alas! they fell away, crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. Their faith, fair as was its aspect, and promising as were its evidences, was after all but superficial and temporary.

Take warning, then, from such examples left on record by the pen of inspiration. Look at these precious vessels, once embarked with auspicious breezes, freighted with immortality, and with prospects of a favourable voyage, and as you see their now stranded wrecks strewn all along the shores of eternity, take warning lest you

also be satisfied with but a shallow experience in the fundamentals of religion; lest you mistake appearances for the reality. See the soldier who has buckled on the armour, and taken "above all" the shield, with a heart beating high, and a spirit for daring deeds, when at last the storm of battle lowers, and the tempest comes down upon him, finding himself naked and exposed, because he had taken for his safeguard a mere fragile, perishable defence, which fails him just when the time for trial arrives,—and from such a spectacle take warning. That faith which endures only for a while, which disappears when the day of temptation or adversity comes, can be no availing protection to you, but will leave you open to the devil's fiery darts, to be pierced, disabled, and carried captive by him at his will. Discard every other material for your shield, and seek alone for that evangelical and spiritual faith to which the apostle assigns so lofty a position in the armory of the Christian soldier.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

WE turn from unbelief both speculative and practical, and from a mere superficial and evanescent faith, which are alike unworthy of adoption into the Christian armory; and may examine with greater profit the nature and offices of that spiritual and evangelical faith which is for a shield to the soldier of the cross.

“Faith,” the apostle himself defines to be “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith in Christ has been well described as “a saving grace, wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, whereby we receive Christ as he is revealed in the gospel, to be our Pro-

phet, Priest, and King, trusting in and relying upon him and his righteousness alone for justification and salvation.”

A fundamental office of faith, therefore, is to transfer to the Christian soldier the meritorious work which the Captain of his salvation has performed in his behalf, and to make this to him for a shield.

As you have already seen when examining the breast-plate of righteousness, our divine Lord and Master has provided for his people an infinite store of merit. For them he bore the curse of Sinai, and trod the wine-press alone; for them he met the monster death, and in his own dark empire conquered him; and for them he ever liveth to make continual intercession. All his glorious achievements when enduring the toil of travel, of night-watches, of weariness of body and anguish of heart, and of his dying strife,—all these were not for himself, but for us; and by his sufferings we are saved, by his death we live.

But by what means is this work of Christ made our own? Through what arrangement can what was achieved by our great leader be reckoned to the credit of his followers? Are all men rescued from the curse because Christ has borne the penalty? Alas! we must answer, No! Notwithstanding the costliness of this sacrifice, many trample it under foot, count the blood of the covenant an unholy

thing, and prefer rather for themselves to run the risk of the law's eternal sanctions.

How then shall we make this work of Christ our own? Must we dig for heaps of gold, or for rare and precious gems, that we may purchase for ourselves a portion of this ransom? Must we offer the fruit of our bodies for the sin of our souls, or go on long and painful pilgrimages to entitle ourselves to a part in the ransom? No such methods for securing an interest in the great propitiation are demanded.

“We are saved,” says the apostle, “by faith.” We have only to believe, and the ransom shall be ours. With humble heart and contrite spirit we must approach the Lamb of Calvary, and there confessing our sins, believe that he is able and willing to do for us all that our souls demand, and without reserve commit our interests for ever to his hands; and thus believing we shall rejoice to see the curse remove. By this simple act of faith in the Son of God we are enabled to appropriate his merits; his righteousness has now become our own; we are provided with wherewithal to meet every demand against us; the law is satisfied, our souls are justified, and we are saved.

You will beware lest, because of its very simplicity, you mistake the nature of this saving faith. It is not a complex act of the mind. It is not something necessarily ob-



scure and afar off. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." You need not wait for Christ to be revealed again from heaven. He is present everywhere by his divine nature, by his word, and by his Spirit; and whosoever calls upon his name shall be saved. Barbarian, Scythian, Jew, Greek, bond and free, have the same way of access, and the same free welcome by the one living door into the kingdom.

How immediate, and how successful, have been the workings of this saving faith! Here were the blind men who came to the Saviour for relief. Long had their sightless orbs desired to behold the sweet and pleasant light of day, but hitherto in vain. They now have found the true Physician. "Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their

eyes were opened ;”—they left the Master rejoicing in the light of day. The woman which for twelve years had had an issue of blood, and had spent her living on physicians, said within herself, “If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole,” and heard as the joyful reply, “Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole. And she was made whole from that hour.” Once when dining at a Pharisee’s house, a broken-hearted woman, whose former life had been one of profligacy, came behind him as he sat at meat, and washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. The self-righteous Pharisees scorned the visitor and her freedom with their guest. But he who knew the heart said to her who had evinced such confiding care and affection, “Thy sins are forgiven.” “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” The thief upon the cross, too, who was only able with his last gasping breath to whisper the prayer, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” was cheered in his departing moments with the assurance, “This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” You have only, like these successful suppliants, to look away from yourself to the helper,—like them to abandon every other refuge but this; and cordially resting on the provisions of a Saviour’s righteousness, you will have exercised that faith without which

it is impossible to please God, and with which there can be no longer any condemnation.

How simple, and yet how suitable and glorious a piece of armour, then, have we here. Sinai may flash its lightnings and roll its deep thunders, the gates of hell may vent their rage, Satan and his allies may hurl their storms of fiery darts; but the humble soldier of the cross shall still hold on his heavenward way unharmed, because by divine grace he has taken to himself the shield of faith, wherewith he is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Faith performs another of its important offices as a shield, by presenting to its possessor both temporal and eternal things in something of their real and relative value.

It was under the vivid impression of the momentous things from the unseen world brought nigh by faith, that the soldier was led to forsake his allegiance to the powers of darkness, and enlist in the armies of light. But these great objects of contemplation and pursuit demand an habitual and permanent consideration,—they must be brought ever nigh, and made always to stand out in their vast proportions, or we shall lose the influence of eternal things, and lose also a correct estimate of the things of time.

In pointing out the wiles of the devil, allusion has already

been made to the spell which the evil one weaves around the children of disobedience, as to the value of all earthly good. You have seen how he can cast a fascination over objects in themselves empty and worthless, and dazzle the senses and bewitch the soul with their pretended charms; and how effectually by this process he draws a curtain over those momentous realities which stretch beyond the bounds of time. Magnifying things present out of all proportion, and shutting out of view the things of the unseen eternity, men are led to live for the world as if this were their everlasting all.

Against so fearful and fatal an infatuation, the Christian's shield affords a protection; for faith penetrates the unseen world, brings to light its solemn realities, and makes them stand out in living colours as if they were just at hand. The man of science, with his magic glass, surveys the boundless fields of distant space, and walks upon his lofty path amidst the stars, until in spirit he is borne away from earth, and lives in those far distant worlds which others see only as constellations in the skies; but the humble Christian soldier, untutored in the halls of science, and with no magic glass but that which grace has wrought within the soul, by faith looks out beyond all constellations, stars, and depths of ether, away into the unfathomable abyss of

the eternal heavens, and dwells upon the matchless wonders of God's great arcana there, until he seems to have been uplifted from these lower spheres to dwell among the glorious things unseen by mortal eyes. "We look not," says the apostle, "at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal."

Now, the fact here brought to view, this connection formed by faith between the believer and the unseen world, reveals to us one great principle by which his life is regulated. He is not living here, but there. His affections, his hopes, his joys, his ever-blessed home,—all are beyond the skies. The truths written by inspiration, which to others may seem as empty words, are to him full of import as to his soul's eternal well-being. Hell is to him no phantom, heaven no mere beautiful vision of fancy, the judgment no empty drama, God and Christ not simply characters on the page of history;—all, all are just as real as are the skies above him, or the earth on which he treads, or the partners of his blood who share his daily converse,—just as real, and infinitely more enduring and important.

Can he, think you, around whom the future world stands ever present and open, live on here as if he were to live for ever here? Can he disregard the calls which summon him



to prepare for actual entrance on those untrodden shores? Can he turn a deaf ear to all warnings as to the approach of death, even though the clods of the valley may be falling on the coffin-lid beneath him, when he has all the while been looking at death as an event inevitable? Can he scorn the denunciations of coming wrath, when he has already seen the gates of the pit, and heard the groans of the lost? or refuse to give heed to the beckonings to the better world, when the pearly gates and golden streets have stood out athwart his vision? Shall he despise the judgment, when before him the books have been opened, and the sheeted dead arraigned? Or can he trample under foot the blood of Christ, or do despite to the Spirit of his grace, when he has seen that by that blood alone he can be cleansed from guilt, and by that Spirit alone he can be renewed after the image of God, and fitted to escape from hell and fly to heaven?

Or tell me, how will this believer, linked by faith to things eternal, look upon the fleeting things of time? Will earthly good seem now so much entitled to pre-eminence? Will it appear worth while for men to toil their lifetime, ever eating the bread of carefulness to heap up a little gold, to gather together a few houses, or farms, or stocks? or to strive after name, and place, and power? or to exhaust

their energies seeking for sensual pleasure in the dance, the jest, the game of chance, or the wine-cup? Ah! tell me, to him who looks behind all these to that fearful day of reckoning in reserve, how shall such a laying out of life seem suited to poor creatures of a day on their journey to eternity? Would he be satisfied with such trifling toys for his immortal portion? such chaff and bubbles for his undying appetites?—such employments as his chief pursuit just on the eve of the judgment, and of heaven or hell? No! ye riches, honours, sensual joys, ye good things of this present world, ye cannot charm the soldier from his heavenward march to find his portion here. He has in view far higher, purer, and more enduring good than you can give.

“He cannot buy your bliss so dear,  
Nor part with heaven for you.”

Tempt him ye may; for the present seem to offer an easier and more attractive lot than his ye may; for a little even turn him from his path of uprightness ye may, but finally make him a conquest of your charms ye never shall; for he has looked beyond the brief day allotted you and seen what shall be your end, and looked at the unseen but certain good in reserve, and learned how that shall satisfy and endure; he has believed the revelations of God's word as to the value of all things temporal and eternal, and thus believing he

is fortified against all your assaults. His faith has proved itself his shield.

This shield of the Christian warrior also performs its office by protecting the soldier against the direct power of temptation. Faith so places God before the soul that we cannot forget that his omniscient eye is on us. We are conscious of his omnipresence; we know his holiness and his utter abhorrence of all evil; we remember the eternal sanctions of his august law, and cannot forget that "the soul that sins shall die." We see in the cross of Christ how horrible a thing is sin, and we see it in the curse it has scattered broadcast over this fallen world. We know too how foolish will be the bargain if we forfeit the favour of God for a mere momentary pleasure; and thus believing our souls are fortified against the assaults of the tempter.

Rich are the provisions, too, which faith furnishes to cheer and support the tempted. She points to all the saints and shows how temptation has been their common lot; she points to the Master himself, as for forty days he was under the power of the tempter, and exhorts us to "consider him who endured such contradiction, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds;" and she points to our own past experience when we have been strongly pressed and yet have found deliverance.

See how this shield proved a defence to Moses in the hour of his trial. “When he was come to years he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward.” Before this humble man of God were placed the most enticing things of time. Station, wealth, and sensual joys, were the rich banquet spread before him. He had only to rid himself of the reproach of Christ, which in itself would have improved the estimation in which he was held,—and then this paradise of carnal good stood wide open for his free admission, and he might enter in and partake to satiety of its fruits.

But beyond this carnal paradise stretched the vision of the tempted saint. Away above all earthly things he saw a banquet spread with richer viands;—a feast whose splendid fruits were poisoned by no bitterness, whose stores were inexhaustible, whose sweet companionships never should be disturbed, and where if a man once ate he should never hunger more;—and with a repast such as this before him, what mattered it that he must be patient until a few brief days had passed their weary rounds; he still looked to the recompense of reward, and waiting for his

expected fruition of the joys to come, willingly denied himself the present seeming good, despising the honours and pleasures of the palace of the Pharaoh's and the rich treasures of Egypt.

Or see Joseph, when also tempted by the appeals of sense. How he stands triumphant over the powerful onsets of the evil one. In the hour of trial his faith brought home the fear of God and of sin to his soul; and amidst the most enticing arguments for sensual pleasure, he is enabled to remain steadfast whilst he cries out, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Vividly before his mind stood out the great omniscient and all holy God,—whose favour to him was life and whose wrath was death, and before whom he must at last appear: and to sin against this God by such wickedness he cannot, he will not, consent. Faith proved to be a shield.

Not unfrequently, too, does this shield protect the soldier against the malignant opponents of the gospel. There are those who have made themselves familiar with the common cantings of infidelity and error, who find their pleasure in assailing weak and ill-instructed Christians. On every hand they beset the humble saint, and with a show of profound logic and research may succeed in entangling their unpractised opponent so that he confesses his inability to



solve the difficulties proposed;—but have they succeeded in turning this uninformed believer into an infidel? By no means. He may be led to say, I am not, indeed, skilled in disputation, nor learned in the technicalities of the schools,—I am not able to meet your objections in argument,—but I know my ground to be the truth, for I have my own actual experience for a witness;—I am sure the doctrines which I hold are divine, for their god-like power I have felt in my own soul. So that though the devil and his earthly allies may intellectually confuse, and ever so much confound the Christian soldier, they cannot conquer him.

He may be assailed as to the reality of a change of heart, and may be unable to satisfy the caviller as to its nature, and the agency by which it is accomplished; and yet neither all the wicked men on earth, nor all the hosts of hell could convince him that there is no such thing as an evangelical and spiritual regeneration, because he has himself actually undergone that change, and its reality is with him no longer a mere theme for speculation, it is matter of experience.

Thus also it is with others of the doctrines which constitute the faith of the believer,—he has inwardly experienced their truth. He has been quickened by their life-giving power; he has been sustained and comforted by the

promises ; he has seen for himself that God is the hearer and the answerer of prayer, and hence is he fortified in his position beyond all successful assault. Let the envenomed arrows from the enemy's ranks be hurled at him ever so thick ; humble and unpretending though this soldier of the cross may seem, in his honest and unwavering faith he has taken to himself a shield more enduring than those of gold or brass,—a shield which will effectually quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

MANIFOLD are the uses for the Christian warrior's shield. Its benefits are not confined to any one time or place, but are seen and felt all through his toilsome, dangerous march. Never is its priceless value more apparent than in the

Defence it affords the soldier of the cross in times of great perplexity and extremity. “We walk by faith,” says the apostle, “not by sight;” and God in his providence oftentimes seems so to shut up his people from the light of sense, that if they walk at all they must walk by faith. Our own devices may have all come to naught; the wisdom of human counsellors has failed; every new effort to extricate ourselves from the harassments by which we are encom-

passed seems but to plunge us deeper into trouble. On every hand we look for light, but behold darkness, until we are constrained to feel that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"—that if help come at all it must come from God alone.

Such occasions of perplexity are by no means rare in the experience of the soldiers of salvation. Often do they seem to be sent on what, to all human observation, must be hopeless errands; often do they seem to be left almost alone and without succour in the enemy's country, where there appears to be no alternative but to perish from want or by a hostile hand. No faithful friends come nigh to bring relief; no cries however piteous seem any where to find the response of sympathy; no last forlorn struggles of the sickening heart, nor of the wasting body, bring any prospect for escape. Long have the heavens been overhung with sable clouds,—heavy and constant have been the peltings of the storm; and still the heavens are black, and still the tempest drives on in its fury. There are no portents of a change of weather. A lot such as this may have been your own. Distressing embarrassments in business, sorrows heavy and long continued, sources of anxiety because of members of your household, these or similar causes may have pressed with mountain-weight

upon your spirit,—a weight which it seemed alike impossible for you to bear, and impracticable for you to avert.

Now, we say that the Captain of Salvation doubtless marches his followers into just such howling deserts, and leaves them in just such extremities, in order that he may teach them to walk by faith and not by sight,—to look utterly away from all dependence on Egypt for help, and to learn where is the only power which can avail.

You have an instance of God's dealings on this wise, with his ancient people, when their flight from Pharaoh had brought them to the borders of the Red Sea. As far as man could judge, their destruction here was inevitable. On either side were inaccessible mountains, behind them thundered the war-chariots of Egypt, at their feet rolled the deep waters. And yet in just this extremity did they find the needful help. Having come to the end of all, walking by sight, they were now to see what faith could do. Right on the borders of the sea though they stood, the command came from their divine leader to "go forward;" and forward they went; and back rolled the waves, and dry-shod they marched in triumph to the other side, leaving the hosts of Egypt to perish in their hopeless attempt at pursuit.

"Go forward;"—such is the language addressed to all God's children in seasons of extremity. Go forward, though



the way seems dark, though your next footsteps threaten to engulf you in hopeless ruin. Go forward in the practice of all Christian graces, in humble obedience to your Master's will, in the exercise of an abiding faith; and rest assured that though Egypt's chariots thunder at your back, and dark mountains rise on either hand, and a deep sea rolls before you, he who has told you to go will prepare a way wherein your feet may safely tread. Only have faith in God, and never fear but that that faith will prove to you a shield equal to any emergency. We may not be able to see the way out of our troubles; but there is a way, and he to whom you have confided your interests knows that way, and in due time will lead you in it. Hear him as he says, "Fear not, I am with thee." Have faith in these words, and take that for your shield.

See also how faith was a shield to the patriarch when called to offer up his son. From a sacrifice so unparalleled and painful, what heart might not have shrunk back? Who would not have been ready with an excuse for the man of God, had he plead off from binding his boy upon the altar, mangling him with the knife, and then seeing him crisped in the flames? But calmly, and without a murmur, did the patriarch prepare the altar and the wood and get ready for the sacrifice. On this journey to the land of Moriah, he had

said to his youthful companion, "My son, God will provide a lamb for a burnt-offering;" and in those words is revealed the grace which upheld the patriarch in this great extremity. The errand might have seemed to him more than strange; he might have thought it unaccountable that a benignant God should call him to this almost inhuman deed; and yet, whether Isaac were to be the offering or not, it was enough for him to know that the Lord would provide; and in this divine confidence he was borne forward through the trying journey, and the more trying building of the altar, and getting ready for the sacrifice; and in the end, saw that what his faith had promised had all been fulfilled. His faith sustained and carried him through the fiery ordeal, and therein proved itself a shield.

This one truth, "the Lord will provide," received into the heart in the full confidence of faith, is of itself a whole panoply of defence. If the Lord will provide, then let sickness, sorrow, famine, danger, death, come when, where, and as they will; if I am a subject of God's care it is enough. The Lord being my shepherd, I shall not want. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls;

yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." "The Lord God is my sun and my shield."

The shield of faith also subserves a most important purpose by making ready the spiritual soldier for great enterprises. We have just seen that it is the way of the leader of Israel's hosts often to shut up his people in circumstances of great extremity. It is also his way at times to gird them for great achievements. Many of the ends accomplished by the faithful follower of Christ often far exceed what at the outset of his campaigns he ever could have anticipated; but the Captain of the hosts has led him on from one conquest to another, his faith all the while growing stronger through success, until at length he has been prepared not only to attempt and expect, but also to accomplish great things.

The fact that faith links the soul through Christ to God, is the great principle which imparts to it such efficiency. If we have constant access to a divine power, if for the sake of him in whose name we approach the throne there is no blessing too large to ask, and no achievement in the spiritual kingdom too great to expect; then why should not faith impart to every soldier of the cross a power of endurance and achievement altogether superhuman? If God be for him, who can be against him? If the power and the

goodness, and the very purposes of Him who ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth is on the side of this militant Christian; however humble and feeble he may be of himself, he need quail before no enemy, he need stagger at no enterprise. Faith scorns all creature obstacles when she lays her hand upon him who controls all creatures at his will. Faith fears not to go out to the dark and stormy night-vigils, or on some distant, and as yet unrevealed campaign, because she has entire confidence in him at whose command she goes; and the great leader of the hosts doubtless often sends forth his soldiers with sealed orders, on purpose to test the strength of their faith, and prove the sincerity of their devotion.

Thus was it with Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country," was the command which came to the patriarch amidst his tents and flocks in Mesopotamia: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Abraham had faith in the wisdom, goodness, and power of God to accomplish all that he declared; and

trusting to this word of promise, he left country, kindred, and his father's house, and went forth not knowing whither he went. The idle multitude and perhaps the partners of his blood, may have regarded the man of God,—starting on an errand he knew not whither, as embarking in a vain and fruitless enterprise. They may have discouraged him from the journey; but faith was the patriarch's shield against all such temptations; and out he went, and onward his footsteps trod, until he had reached the land of Canaan, where was fulfilled the promise, that his seed should be “as the stars of the sky in multitude.”

“Make thee an ark,” was the voice from heaven to Noah. “And behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth,” saith God, “to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven.” No signs were there in the skies of a coming deluge. Years passed on whilst the ark was building, and still were there no portents of the threatened storm. The unbelieving might have said, “Where is the promise of his coming?” “All things continue as they were from the beginning;” the seasons still run their accustomed rounds; seed-time and harvest, day and night still come and go according to their established order. To the eye of sense, no visionary madman ever was engaged in a wilder scheme than this great ark-



building. Yet, the good man's confidence in the divine command faltered not, and on he went with the ark, until at length the work was done; and then came the deluge sweeping away the mockers, whilst Noah and his household rode in safety on the bosom of the waters. Faith was his shield against all suggestions of unbelief, and discouragements from without; and his confidence in God, as the result proved, was not misplaced.

So also did faith protect and carry forward the men of God in apostolic times, amidst their mighty toils and conquests for the Captain of Salvation. Few they were in number, and feeble; against them were arrayed the learning, power, wealth, fashion, and prejudices of the world. Looking only at the comparative strength of the human agencies to be engaged, they might well have cried out in despair, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And yet, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," said Paul; and what he said, was in substance the language and spirit of his fellow-soldiers. And hence this little band, with their meagre numbers, unknown names, and feeble weapons, went out to the conquest of the world, and before their footsteps thrones tottered and empires fell, until the glorious victory for the faith had been won.

What has not faith accomplished? Behind this shield

of the gospel panoply what have not the soldiers of the cross been ready to be and do and suffer? Have dangers thick and fearful threatened the church of God? Have afflictions beyond all parallel befallen Zion? Have her strong ones fallen in the ranks and her feeble ones proved faint-hearted and faithless? Has her prosperity seemed to give place to chilling long-continued adversity?—still has the good soldier clung to the promises, believing that all was in good hands, that Zion's interests were in safe-keeping, that no weapon formed against her should prosper; and that he who sits as king upon his holy hill would in due time beat down his foes, and so turn back the darkling providences, that light should again arise upon his spiritual empire, and Zion again put on her beautiful garments, the glory of the Lord having risen upon her.

So faith also protects the believer against all suggestions of unbelief as to the future triumphs of the church on earth; and makes him ready to do his work with quietness and perseverance, no matter what the prospects to the eye of sense. The conquests of the armies of salvation may have hitherto been ever so few; one enterprise after another may have seemed fruitless; the means and men which have been enlisted may almost have seemed sacrificed to no purpose; yet will the faithful soldier still gird on his armour, stand

at his post, and wage on the warfare just as zealously, as if he always saw that his strokes were telling on the enemy's ranks,—that the powers of darkness were continually melting away before his triumphant footsteps. It is enough for him to know, that his Lord has sent him to the battle-field, that he goes not on this warfare at his own charges, and that his business is to do good service in the army, whilst it is his master's to take care of the victory. He has taken faith for his shield.

With what weapons has not Satan assaulted the saints of the Most High; how long and dreary have been the evil days of the conflict through which they have been called to pass; and over what appalling evils has not their faith proved victorious! Believing that the cause in which they were enlisted would prove ultimately and completely triumphant; looking upon themselves but as frail instruments for ushering in its reign; and feeling entire confidence that whatever might befall them would be for the best,—that though they perished they should individually conquer, and the work still go on; they have meekly and fearlessly braved every species of danger, and whitened with their bones more than ten thousand battle-fields. “By faith” the soldiers of the cross “have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions; quenched the vio-

lence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens;—they were stoned, they were sawn asunder; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented,—they wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth.” Great, appalling and inhuman as were the sufferings set before these valiant soldiers, and feeble as they were in themselves, yet invested with the panoply of the gospel,—fortified behind the shield of faith, they went fearlessly forward, braving the fierce torrents of death;—and though many of them laid down upon the field their mortal lives, yet did they all come off in their immortal lives much more than conquerors.

Not one in all the great armies of salvation is there now, who is not marching under this shield of faith to the scenes of his eternal triumph. It is this which enables the believer to look upon all earthly things as vanity; to count all here but loss that he may win Christ, and be found in him; to press on through temptation, disaster, and sorrow, to the mark of the high calling of God. It is this which makes him journey as a pilgrim and stranger on earth, feeling that here he has no continuing city, and no abiding place,—that he seeks a better, even a heavenly country.

Even in the land of promise did Abraham sojourn as in a strange country; “for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” The placid skies and fruitful soil of Canaan, its scenes hallowed by converse with his God, charming as they may have been to the eye of sense, and sacred because of pleasant memories, made up no dwelling-place which he would call his home. Far away above those skies, unseen to mortal vision, there rose upon his sight a city;—a city whose walls were precious stones, whose streets were shining gold, whose gates were pearls, whose skies were nightless, whose inhabitants were sinless, whose sun was God and the Lamb,—a city which had immovable foundations, eternal in the heavens. With a vision such as this,—a sinless, sorrowless, celestial home standing full in view, and ready for his entrance; how could he have fixed his habitation amidst terrestrial things? Why should he not have sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, looking, as he did, for this city made ready for him in the better heavenly land?

As did Abraham, so do all the followers of Christ, “declare plainly that they seek a country;” and no matter how strong the ties to bind them here, or how charming may be some of the scenes this side the flood, still are they looking by faith for that spirit-land, that city of the



skies where all their hopes are fixed, and in which they expect to take up their everlasting residence. Over all the solicitations of time and sense, the soldiers of the cross are conquerors, clad as they are with the shield of faith.

Reader, have you put on this piece of armour? Under the Christian warrior's shield are you protected against temptation and discouragement, inspired for noble enterprises, and quenching all the fiery darts which the wicked may hurl against you?

How much the church needs this grace of faith! Were she but, in all her members, clad as she should be with this piece of panoply, what a history might soon be written of her progress and her conquests! How quickly would her reproach be wiped away! "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," said the Saviour, "ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible for you." Nothing impossible for you! Is not this promise large enough? Nothing impossible; neither the conversion of your household, nor a revival of religion in the church of which you are a member, nor a general and unprecedented outpouring of the Spirit over the land, nor the universal spread of the light and knowledge of salvation through the world,—nothing shall be impossible to faith.

But, alas! how much the reverse of this is true. How seldom are your prayers answered, how rarely is your church revived, how slowly is religion extended through the land, how little is accomplished in spreading it through the world. "O ye of little faith."

Take, then, afresh your shield for battle. Attempt, expect, and by the grace of God accomplish great things for the kingdom of your Lord. Only believe, and then know that all things are possible.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE HELMET OF HOPE.

“ And take the helmet of salvation.”

No suit of armour could be complete without a protection for the head. This great ruling member, the very citadel of intelligence and vital energy, is too important to be left unguarded. Hence, from the remotest ages, the helmet has been in use amongst all martial nations. The champion of the Philistines had a helmet of brass upon his head, as had also the king of Israel who commanded the armies of the living God. The Persians and Ethiopians also wore this martial cap in the day of battle, as did likewise the warlike Greeks. The helmet of the latter was usually made of skins, rendered hard and impervious to the weapons then in use; but the glittering brass or iron helmet of the Jewish warrior seems the most fit type of that piece of

panoply which the apostle places in the armour of the Christian soldier. With this brazen or iron casque upon his head, the Jewish warrior could stand unhurt under the strokes of the brandished sword, or come out uninjured from amidst the storm of arrows. With its "dazzling brightness, its horrific devices of gorgons and chimeras, and its nodding plumes which overlooked the dreadful cone," his helmet struck terror into the hearts of his enemies. Hence the apostle very properly, when pointing out to us the panoply, designates the helmet as a piece of armour the Christian soldier must put on.

In the letter to the Thessalonians, the nature of this helmet is more specially revealed, where we are exhorted to take for a helmet "the hope of salvation." Hope, then, is the helmet of the Christian soldier; and as there was usually graven upon the ancient helmet some single word or sentence as a motto, so must the soldier of the cross have graven on his crest, as emblematic and descriptive of the spirit of his warfare, the word "Hope." How aptly does this brief motto set forth his belief as to the ultimate result of his conflicts. This good hope of salvation is the helmet of the gospel panoply.

Hope! how beautiful that word! how expressive and suggestive! How hope paints the future in bright and joyous

colours! how it speaks in the hour of sorrow and trial, of the breaking away of the storm, and the sunshine to come after! How it whispers words of cheering to the disconsolate mourner; and stands by the side of the labouring man amidst the heavy burden of his overwrought nature; and travels with the wayfarer, telling him amidst the fatigues of his journey of the resting-place at the end; and voyages with the mariner pointing him to the day-streaks in the skies after the long and boisterous night; and visits the prisoner in his cell to whisper of broken chains, opened doors, and liberty regained. Who could inhabit this bleak world without hope? Who could live on his lifetime, eating ever the bitter bread, and drinking the scalding tears of despair? Woe to the man in whose bosom the sweet light of hope has been extinguished.

It is not this common principle of humanity, however, dear as it is, which constitutes the helmet of the soldier of salvation. The Scriptures tell us of the hope of the hypocrite which shall perish; of that hope which maketh ashamed, and of those who are confounded because they had hoped. There are illusions of hope, as well as realities. The way-faring man, lost in his night-travels, may mistake for the light of some human abode promising shelter and rest, the phantom which recedes before his advancing footsteps until it



leads him into the wild morass, and plunges him into the deep waters to perish. Many have been the wayfarers in the night of life's toil, who have thus followed the illusive lanterns of false hope, until they have plunged into the lake from whose bosom no traveller returns. We must guard you against availing yourself of false hopes in your onward march to eternity. See that you bind not on your brows such a helmet as the enemy's sword may cleave in twain, or through which his arrows may enter to lay waste life's citadel.

You will beware, for instance, of taking for a helmet the hope of future repentance. A common refuge is this for the gospel-taught worldling;—for the man who knows what his duty requires, feels that he should have an interest in the plan of redemption, but is yet so much in love with the world that he cannot forsake it, and puts off the great interests of eternity to some future and promised “convenient season.” Such a man is not, indeed, without impressions of the importance of a personal interest in Christ; he has at times convictions of sin and a sense of his danger, and knows that without evangelical piety he cannot expect to die in peace. Still he has no apprehension of the beauty of Christ; nor of the excellency of his religion, in itself considered. True piety is regarded by him simply as a dire

necessity,—the only means of escape from a more appalling alternative. Hence it is thought of simply as a palliative for the dying hour, or a specific against the place of torment;—it is not a thing for him to live by, but to die by. Hence, also, as long as death and perdition seem far away, he pushes into the future his intended repentance, and still waits on for his “convenient season.” Like Felix, he may say, “go thy way for this time;” but like Felix also he will say, “I will call for thee.” With horror would he shrink from the thought that the long-awaited-for season would never arrive.

Now, beyond doubt, this man has buckled upon himself some sort of a helmet; but is it not of necessity a vain refuge for safety? Does this piece of panoply guard against sin? Does it not rather lead him to continue in sin, because of the abounding of grace? Does it protect against the wiles of the devil? Or does it not rather rivet more firmly the chains of his bondage, and lead him to hug them more closely and constantly to his misguided soul?

We need not resort to argument in order to show how this hope of future repentance leads to destruction. I point you to facts. Here is a strong man, who, in the spring time of life, when he walked under the sunlight which gilded his path, was unwilling, though called by God’s

word and his Spirit, to remember his Creator in the days of his youth ; and put off to the hour of maturity the heeding of the voice divine. That mature life has come ; but has the promised repentance also come ? Alas ! the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things now crowd upon him, until he has no time for the concerns of his soul ; and now waits for the toils of maturity to be exchanged for the “ convenient season ” of a quiet old age.

See that old man, with deep furrows on his cheeks, his locks whitened with the snows of seventy winters. As, with tottering footsteps and trembling hand, he grasps his staff, he seems but treading on the utmost brink of life’s fast-wasting shores. Surely you would think that old man must now be preparing for some other, better world, to take the place of this he is so soon to leave ; death is already stiffening his limbs, dimming his sight, and shutting up all his senses ;—that man will surely now do the long-neglected work, and prepare for the speedy meeting with his God. But is this old man an humble, pious Christian ? He thought in the toil of his mid-day strife he would turn to God in old age ; but old age has come, and brought with it the long-cherished habits of neglecting salvation, the inertness of spirit, the reluctance to great effort, the hardness of heart, and the searing of conscience which make the way to

the cross a difficult and repulsive path to him; and that man of gray hairs, furrowed cheeks, bended frame, and waning senses, totters on without repentance still.

Look again! In this chamber lies a sick man on his couch. But yesterday the bloom of youth was on his cheek, or the strength of stern manhood was in his limbs. Pallor has driven that bloom away; strength has given place to helpless weakness; disease is doing its work; he is about to die. You speak to him of his approaching end, and remind him that he cannot die in peace without the Saviour; but with the wild eye of delirium he gazes, heeding not your words; or, when the delirium is past, his exhausted nature is unstrung, and racking pains have turned his bed into a place of torment, so that he looks up sadly, and exclaims, "I should have done that work whilst I had health and strength; this is no place for doing the great neglected business of my life; it is too late! Alas! I am undone!" And too late it proves to be. He is undone, and that for ever!

These, as you know full well, are not pictures of fancy; but scenes from reality. Here you may learn what reliance can be placed upon the hope of repentance at some "convenient season." Here you see this frail helmet cleft asunder, and the wretched victims who wore it laid

low by the delusions of that hope which for ever makes ashamed.

But you must also be guarded against wearing for a helmet the hope of being saved by the mere general mercy of God. "God is love," cries a worldly-minded or profligate unbeliever. He would not have made his creatures just to destroy them. He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" there is no such thing as a hell;—and this man in some sense believes what he says. Or, if he admits the necessity of an atonement for sin, he flatters himself that as Christ has died for sinners, he also may through this general atonement come in for exemption from the penalty of the law. Hence his fears are lulled, conscience is silenced, and he is disturbed but little with apprehensions of falling a prey to the prince of darkness.

It would seem to be a sufficient refutation of all objections against the doctrine of future punishment, founded upon the fact that God is too merciful to inflict suffering on his creatures, that in the very world around us we see that God actually does inflict suffering. Look around; does not the voice of sorrow meet you everywhere? Is not the first breath with which our poor humanity enters on life a cry, and does it not at length breathe out that life's last end with a groan? Are there not for all of us here,



pains, sickness, tears, and aching hearts? Is it not appointed unto all men once to die? In fact, is not the whole world but as one great hospital, in which there are all manner of sick, halt, maimed and impotent folk,—a great Bochim, in which are mingled the tears of a household of mourners? How then can you say that God is too merciful to inflict suffering on his creatures, when there stares you in the face the fact that his creatures are receiving suffering at his hands every day? You can show no reason why God will not inflict suffering in the next world, when you know he does in this. On the contrary, many reasons drawn from the nature of every well-constituted government might be adduced to warrant the presumption that there would even be a stronger necessity for a state of suffering beyond the grave than this side of it.

But turn from the speculations of philosophy to the Bible. Does not this word of God which cannot lie declare that there will be a state of punishment for the wicked, as well as a state of happiness for the righteous, and that the one is to be equally endless with the other? If there is to be no punishment for the wicked after death, what are we to understand by God's separating the sheep from the goats; by his driving those on his left hand under an awful sentence into everlasting fire; by the worm that never dies,—by the

flame which is never quenched,—the weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth,—the lake of fire, and the volumes of torment which ascend up for ever and ever? These are but figures of speech, replies the deluded sinner; this language does not teach such dreadful things as you affirm;—and with this hasty, ill-founded, unwarranted conclusion in a matter involving his eternal well-being, quietly settles down in carnal security, flattering himself that God is too merciful to send any to hell. Here is a helmet; but alas! it is a frail one. The missiles of the devil and his allies and the fierce wrath of an angry God, will shatter it into a thousand fragments; and its wretched wearer will fall a prisoner to the hosts of darkness, because his helmet was not the good hope of salvation.

Nor must we pass from this part of the subject without warning you against wearing for a helmet the hope of being saved because you are in connection with the visible church. Hard is it for men to learn that a mere profession of religion is not religion;—that there is a wide difference between being in the church and being in Christ; and that there shall be “many” who have sat at the table of the Lord on earth, who shall be excluded from the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven. In vain do the Scriptures define true piety as of necessity showing itself in

visible fruits; in vain do God's ministers urge it upon the people to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; in vain do they enforce these appeals by the love we should bear our ruined fellow-men, the love of Christ our Saviour, and the hope of reward in heaven;—the slumbering, worldly-minded professor cares for none of these things. He is not so easily disturbed in his security; he is in the church, and has been there a long time; his general life is as consistent as that of most professors;—he sees no call for such great sanctity; believes there is such a thing as being righteous overmuch; and perhaps speaks of those who in faithfulness enforce upon him a higher standard than this mere outward ceremonial, as illiberal, rigid, sanctimonious, and disposed to lord it over other men's consciences.

Now, here is a helmet; and with it clasped close upon his brow, the deluded wearer seems to be a stranger to wholesome fears; he is crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. If he cast not away this spurious casque, he will be cleft asunder,—for beyond doubt he wears not for a helmet the good hope of salvation.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE HELMET OF HOPE.

“And take the helmet of salvation.”

THE hope of the Christian has to do with better things than those which are confined within the bounds of time, or which derive their value solely from the estimate put upon them by a mere grovelling, earthly mind. The hope of the worldling, while it lasts, perhaps sheds light upon the dark and troubled spirit, turns sorrow into joy, and cheers up the fainting heart by the prospect of better things in the as yet unrevealed future. But the hope of the believer stands on a firmer basis, rises higher, takes hold of better comforts, and speeds on the footsteps of the pilgrim soldier with the prospect of far brighter joys to come, than that mere common principle which cheers universal humanity on its march

from the cradle to the grave. The hope of the believer has been well defined to be that grace "whereby, through Christ, he expects and waits for all those good things of the promise he has not yet received."

The helmet of hope and the shield of faith are intimately connected. The two pieces of armour are joined together, and serve a purpose to each other, much as their position would seem to separate them. Hope and faith are sister graces of the Spirit. Faith is in some sense the minister of hope. Had we no faith in things to come, how could we hope for them? Hope has not to do with things present, "for what a man seeth, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Now, "faith is the substance of things hoped for." Faith sits at home receiving the promise, whilst hope looks from the lattice for the approach of the blessing. Faith tells us the story of good things in reserve, and then hope quietly and peacefully expects them. Faith told God's mourning people in the bondage of Egypt of a land of liberty and plenty; and in hope they left their homes and journeyed towards the promised Canaan. So faith tells the spiritual pilgrim, amidst the toils and sorrows of this desert world, of the better country in reserve, and of the deliverances to be wrought for him by the way; and in



hope of the promise he treads his thorny path to the Canaan of the skies. It is this hope which makes the helmet of the Christian warrior, inspiring him for every enterprise, cheering him under every disaster and discouragement, and rendering him steadfast and persevering to his journey's end.

Let us examine the qualities of the helmet of salvation.

The believer's hope is well founded;—unlike those refuges of lies to which your attention has been called. The Christian builds not upon the sandy foundation, where, when the rains descend, the winds blow, and the storms beat, the house must fall and overwhelm its occupant in the ruin. He rests upon the solid rock, where, though the rains do fall, and the winds blow, and the storms beat, his house still stands firm and secure. The rock on which he builds is Christ Jesus. “Our Lord Jesus Christ,” says the apostle, “who is our hope.” Before the foundations of the world were laid, this rock on which the Christian rests his hopes was firmly fixed with that great end in view. With a full perception of all that was to come, man's creation, temptation, fall, the total and hopeless ruin in which he was to be overwhelmed; the plan was devised and agreed upon by which the ruins of the fall should be retrieved, and the wreck of humanity rebuilt in the image and favour of God. The covenant of grace was complete. In this cove-

nant Christ was made the great corner-stone of the spiritual temple to be reared; and every successive block, brought from the quarries of the world and sin, by the power of grace divine, which was to be added to these uprising walls, was to rest upon this great corner-stone, Christ Jesus.

And let me ask, is not this rock, Christ Jesus, a firm foundation? Hear what qualities the prophet Isaiah and the apostle Peter have ascribed to this stone. He is "elect," that is, chosen for this express purpose,—chosen from eternity, chosen out of all the glorious materials of the universe of God as the most glorious of all, chosen with the express intention that on him all the redeemed should rest as the "hope of Israel." He is "a tried stone,"—not one which has to be the subject of future experiments in order to test its strength and durability. He has been tried already; tried in the first sacrifice he was called to make in laying aside his glory to come on his errand of love; tried by all the infirmities of our nature, hunger, thirst, weariness, weeping;—tried in the ordeal of temptation from the devil, and by the derision and mockery of men;—tried in the agonies of the garden, in the forsaking of his friends, and his betrayal by a professed follower;—tried in the shameful pretence of a legal conviction in the judgment-

hall;—tried in the sore conflict with the death of the cross; tried for three days in the silence of the tomb;—tried by multitudes who have trusted in him, and through his merits have entered on the promised rest, and by multitudes more as yet on earth, but waiting for the promise. He is called also a “precious” stone,—he is not worthless like the common rocks scattered everywhere over the earth’s surface; but like the rare and prized gem which is always held to be precious. He is precious in the eyes of his Father, being his only begotten, well-beloved Son; precious in the sight of angels who behold his glories in the world above, and rejoice to do his bidding; precious to the ransomed throng around his throne who have been redeemed through his blood; and precious in the hearts of all his saints on earth.

Here, then, on this great rock of ages, chosen, tried, and precious, surely you will not doubt that he who has forsaken every other refuge, has secured for his hope a firm foundation. Resting here, the storms of life may beat; the wild surges wrought by the prince of the powers of the air may dash and roar; but unmoved shall be this rock, towering high above the tumult of these lower spheres, and upholding in safety the soldier of the cross who has here sought and secured the foundation for his hope.

The hope of the Christian soldier is also reasonable. "Be ready always," says the apostle, "to give to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." The spiritual warrior is supposed to be a social being; he is joined with others in the march from the city of destruction to the New Jerusalem; and it is to be presumed that these wayfaring warriors, in the midst of their long journeyings, and their night-watches, will sometimes question each other as to their views and motives in joining the service. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another;"—their lips were not always silent as to the great absorbing object of their souls. Do men that are in the hardships of martial life never speak to each other of the lands they have left behind, the dangers they have already met, and are still to meet; or of the laurels they are expecting to wear when returning from the strife? Do they never compare their weapons, and seek, by mutual counsel, to put their equipments into the best possible condition? Be ready, then, at all times, to render to your fellow-soldiers "a reason of the hope that is within you."

Or if from the wicked and gainsaying world which opposes, there come questions as to this hope which has led you to a warfare with its friends, then be ready here also to assign a reason of the hope that is within you. It may be that

some Rabshakeh will come to you saying, "What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? Thou sayest, I have counsel and strength for the war. Now, on whom dost thou trust?" And if amidst such reproaches you are not able to give a reason of your hope, there will be both discomfiture to yourself and triumph for the adversary.

The true Christian is a reasonable man,—the most reasonable of all men. Whilst madness and folly are bound up in the hearts of his enemies, he acts under an intelligent impulse, as a rational and accountable being. It has not been for a vain and foolish crusade that he has left the world behind him, but because he has good reason to know that the world, with all the fashion thereof, will finally perish. He has not, under some dire superstition, merely imagined himself a sinner, and in need of a Saviour; but, under the teachings of Him whose word is truth, he has learned how evil and bitter a thing sin is; he has felt in his own soul its power and its curse; he has ascertained that all creature help for him is vain; and sorrowing, smitten, helpless as he was, has fled to the cross, and there found pardon and peace in believing. He has learned by experience how God can be just and yet justify a sinner; and in this method of justifying grace has found such fitness for his wants, that were there ten thousand other ways of being



saved, he would have none but this. He believes on sufficient evidence the promises of God, and waits for their fulfilment. He believes that he must die, and through the mediation of Him who is his high priest and intercessor, hopes for heaven beyond the grave. Now, in all this there is nothing unreasonable. He has satisfied himself of the truths on which his faith takes hold, and to act otherwise than he does upon such premises, would be supremely irrational.

But the Christian soldier can also give a reason of his hope still more in detail as to God's special dealings with himself. His views have reference not simply to the plan of salvation as a thing proposed, but as a thing to himself applied. He may not indeed be able to tell the exact day or the hour when he was brought from death unto life,—for the workings of grace in the heart are not always distinct and obvious to our untutored vision; but he will know that the change has taken place; that he is not as he once was; that old things have passed away, and all things have become new. He will be able to speak of his changed views, changed tastes, changed purposes, and changed life; and in thus doing, will be ready always to give a reason of his hope, to every man that asketh him.

As an example of this readiness to give a reason of the

Christian's hope, see Paul, when arraigned at Jerusalem. He has been ruthlessly driven from his devotions in the temple; around him stand soldiers and centurions, and without howl the mob, thirsting for his blood. He is "borne by the soldiers, for the violence of the people." And when on the stairs of the castle permitted to speak for himself, he straightway tells the story of his life,—his faith, his education, his piety according to the law, his persecution of the saints, his heavenly call from the lips of the crucified Jesus, on the way to Damascus; his acceptance of that call, and espousal of the persecuted cause; and in his subsequent arraignment appeals to truths admitted by his enemies, as he cries out, "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead am I called in question." Paul was a faithful soldier. The enemy came fiercely upon him; but he was able to give a reason of his hope which confounded his accusers, and he came off a victor, because he wore for his helmet the reasonable hope of salvation.

The hope of the Christian soldier has also a good object in view. How vain are oftentimes those objects which call out the hopes of the worldling. He pursues phantoms,—airy dreams which never will be realized; or his imagination gilds some hideous thing as glittering gold, which, when possessed, proves to be but worthless dust. His

hoped-for good is but like the apples of Sodom, which, however beautiful to the eye, fall to ashes at the touch.

The difference between the hope of the Christian and that of the sinner, is world-wide in this, that the Christian has in his view objects which are always real, which never disappoint, and which are of immortal value. What he hopes for in the exercise of his spiritual faculties, is good, only good, and always good. Well may it therefore be termed "a good hope." Take for instance, deliverance from sin;—for this the believer hopes; is not this deliverance a good thing? What is sin but that which is offensive in the sight of God and of all holy beings, but that which drove angels from heaven, but that which has filled the world with sorrow and death, but that which has provoked the curse of an angry God, and built the prison of hell; surely there can be no more desirable object than deliverance from so appalling an evil. Daily does the Christian soldier breathe the prayer taught by the lips of the Saviour, "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil."

"His grief and burden long has been,  
Because he could not cease from sin."

But faith has taught him that for those who in patience and perseverance are striving for the victory over a corrupt

nature, there will be deliverance. He humbly trusts that in such patient and perseverant use of all appointed means he is struggling for the victory; and hope tells him that the promised deliverance will in due time be his, that he shall at last tread his old enemy under his feet, shake off the remnants of his corrupt nature, and stand forth disenthralled, the sinless tenant of a sinless world.

The hope of the Christian soldier still further embraces as its object deliverance from the pains of hell;—and is not such deliverance a good thing? Who would wish to be banished for ever from the presence of God, to dwell in outer darkness, to make his bed in flames of fire through an eternal night, to feel for ever the fangs of the worm that never dies, to be the companion of the devil and his angels and take part in the horrid dissonance of their perpetual wailings? True, the wicked and ungodly seem to court hell as their portion, and continue to walk in the broad road which leads directly to its gates, and disregard all warnings as to their fast-hastening doom; but still, it cannot be that they go to that “lone land of dark despair,” because they believe that there they will satisfy the oft-repeated question of their souls, “Who will show us any good.” Alas! poor infatuated worldlings, they are beguiled by the present seeming joys of the way, whilst they forget the sorrow of

its end; they are enamored of the present and put far off the future, and will not consider whither their rapid steps are tending.

The Christian is a thoughtful man, he has weighed well the present and the future too; he knows that there is a reaping as well as a sowing, and that he that "soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Hence, although the fear of hell was not the leading motive which made him a servant of his Heavenly Master, nor is the prevailing influence which speeds his footsteps onward in the march; yet he cannot forget that there is a world of endless sorrow, nor that by nature he was a culprit "condemned already." Often when in the way of transgressors have its terrors come upon him as if to torment him before the time; often have its dark scenes sprung up in the turmoil of life with more frightfulness than the night-dreams of a disordered mind. Remembering "the hole of the pit whence he has been digged," he can but remember also the bottomless pit whence he has been rescued; and no unwelcome thought is it to him, that his footsteps have been turned by grace divine from the road that leads to death, that for him the wide gate no longer yawns, the lurid fires and the devil and his angels no longer wait. He has a hope and a good hope that he shall be delivered from the pains of hell.



But his hope also embraces the divine principle that all present evils shall issue for him in real good. In this world he does, indeed, share those sorrows which are the common appointment of humanity. He did not anticipate exemption from these ills, in taking up the cross; but having counted the cost, rather counted on an accumulation of his trials because of the warfare in which he enlisted. He knew that this very warfare would bring out against him fresh enemies, that the straight and narrow way would lead him through a hostile country, where he must lay down every thing to escape with his life, and that the very Master whom he served would find it necessary to march him through an ordeal of discipline, in order to fit him both for the service, and for the enjoyment of the final victory. But knowing these things, well also does he know that all ills which might be encountered would be turned to joys in the end for him; that the adverse winds would but drive him off from sunken rocks and wild lee-shores, and that though his voyage might thus seem more circuitous and tedious, yet, in the result, it would be all the safer. Faith, hope's sister, has whispered to his heart that the Master "maketh all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose;" and amidst all seeming ills, hope remembers that promise, and

waits for the approach of the good when the present evil shall have accomplished its work. The skies may be clouded and stormy, but hope looks out for the rainbow, the bright sky and the purer atmosphere after the storm. Sickness and sorrows, doubts and fears may weigh heavy on the spirit; but hope still waits for "the peaceable fruits of righteousness" which shall come after these afflictions which are, for the present, "grievous."

Now, is not this hopeful and always hoping condition of the Christian soldier, a thing to be desired? Who would not almost envy the lot of him, who, however heavy might be his present burdens, was always confidently believing that they were working for him good; and patiently bearing the burdens whilst he waited for the promised blessings? How sweet amidst the scenes of this sad life to be ever cheered on with the assurance that though "weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning."

But you must not omit to notice also, as another element embraced in the object of the Christian soldier's hope,—a conformity to the image of Christ. From the first he has known that the possession of this image was indispensable to true soldiership; and but for evidence that he has been in some measure transformed into this image, he could not hope to be called a follower of his espoused Master. But

this image is imperfect. Its lineaments are, indeed, upon the heart and life; but these are often dimmed by contact with the world and sin. He longs for a greater likeness to the great pattern divine.

True, it is no small matter to be delivered from sin and from hell, and to be assured that all life's seeming ills are working for his welfare; but much as are prized these blessings, the Christian heart sighs for a yet higher good,—transformation into the more perfect image of Jesus.

Now to the true Christian, this Christ-like transformation is not only a thing desired, it is a thing hoped for. The believer knows that “he that hath begun a good work in him will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ;” that as truly as he is a Christian, so truly is the will of God his sanctification, and that whilst by faith he beholds the great exemplar, he shall be transformed into his image, until at last when he sees him as he is, he shall be perfectly like him.

And tell me what better thing could be desired than a likeness to Christ? Where will you find a pattern so excellent? where a spirit so much to be imitated? Where more heavenly virtues than meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, goodness, truth, holiness, harmlessness, and a nature undefiled?

But the Christian soldier's hope stops not within the

bounds of time. It is far-reaching as eternity ; and in that vast world which stretches out beyond the grave, lies the goal of all his expectations. Being delivered from sin, he wishes to be beyond the reach of sin ; being rescued from hell, he longs to be in that happy state where its terrors are unknown ; believing that all seeming evil shall accomplish good, he is waiting for the full results of that ordeal of discipline and trial, where discipline and trial shall be no longer needed ; and being like unto Christ, he longs to be near Christ, to be with Christ, to hear his voice, to see his face, to shout his praise, and dwell with him where he shall go no more out for ever.

Sweet is the thought to the soldier amidst his long march under burning skies, or his day of hard-fought battles, that there shall come the evening's shades, when he may cast aside his armour and lay him down to rest, no more parched by burning suns nor disturbed by resistant foes. The hope of rest when the day is over cheers the ploughman in his field, and all the labourers of earth amidst their many toils ; and the hope that "there remaineth a rest for the people of God,"—a rest where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary find repose, cheers the drooping spirit of the wayfaring soldier of salvation amidst the hardships of his service here ; and the thought that

these hardships will all soon be over, makes him bear them with courage and quietness whilst they last. So that you perceive that in various aspects, the believer's hope has for its object, not the vain, delusive day-dreams of the children of this world; but real good, substantial good, good unalloyed and good enduring. Who would not wish to put on the helmet of hope?



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE HELMET OF HOPE.

“And take the helmet of salvation.”

JOHN BUNYAN tells us that he saw in his dream “that Christian went not forth alone, for there was one whose name was Hopeful, who joined himself unto him, and entering into a brotherly covenant, told him that he would be his companion;” and though Hopeful may at times have been too sanguine, and too ready to look on the bright side of all they encountered, yet he continued the companion of Christian even to the castle of Giant Despair, and with Christian at last crossed “the river.” Now, this Hopeful, who was the companion of the pilgrim Christian, is also the companion of the soldier Christian, as you have already seen, and in some other aspects which we will do well to

consider. The soldier of the cross never parts company finally with his helmet hope, until he has also parted company with his warfare;—and this leads to the remark that

The hope of the Christian soldier is steadfast. “Which hope,” says Paul, “we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” We freely admit that, practically, the Christian’s hope is not always as steadfast as it should be, or as it might be. The hopes of most believers are extremely fluctuating. The infirmities of our physical nature have much to do with shutting out the light of hope from the soul. We are beings of a twofold organization, and the physical and spiritual man have an intimate relation. A diseased or wearied body may make a dull and beclouded mind. Not a few of the eminent saints of God have suffered sad and long eclipses of their hope from the influence of a morbid state of health. Then, also, relapses into sin, neglect of known duty, want of spirituality in the devotions of the closet, and other causes may bring clouds over the face of hope. Even Hopeful, Christian’s companion, fell once into the castle of Giant Despair.

But these temporary fluctuations of the believer’s hope do not destroy it. Whatever may be the depressions of the Christian, in the main, and through his life, he still has a hope through grace in Christ Jesus. He has it in his

youth, in his manhood, in his old age. He has it beaming brightly upon him at least at intervals all his journey through. It is a permanent, abiding, never to be destroyed principle whilst he sojourns here below. It is a hope sure in its results, and steadfast to the end; and, as we shall presently see, may become, by long experience, far more than at first, a constantly realized principle of the soul.

“Which hope we have as an anchor.” The apostle here leaves the martial, and takes up the beautiful maritime imagery. He looks upon the believer as a mariner, with his bark launched upon life’s tempestuous ocean, where he must sail on boisterous seas, over sunken rocks, and under beetling lee-shores;—where danger will come in the lightning’s flash and the fierce rush of the billows, the wild howl of the winds, or the loud thunder of the breakers’ roar; and thus launched, gives him hope for his anchor. So that though the spiritual mariner may be oft in “perils by the sea,” he need but cast his anchor over the bows of his bark, and then say to his fears, “Be still.” For, unlike the anchorage ground of sand and mud, to which this world’s voyagers must trust; this anchor of the Christian’s bark reaches far within the veil, taking hold of the rock which has been cleft for its entrance; and, thus secured, he will outride the storms of his passage, and at last safely

bring up in the haven of eternal peace. His anchor is sure and steadfast.

Just now, however, it may be well for you to observe that this Christian warrior's helmet of hope is efficient and operative. It is called by the apostle "a lively hope;"—it is not a thing dead and unproductive. It is said to "work," and work by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world. You have already been warned against putting on for a helmet that vain, inoperative hope, which brings forth no sanctifying fruits in the life. Hope, in its very nature, is an active principle. It is the great main-spring of all human conduct. Take away all hope from the human heart, and the poor unfortunate sits down in listless despair, unfit to act his part in any of the concerns of mortal life. The hope of distinction inspires the ambitious man for the long years of toil which lie between him and the goal of his desires. The hope of wealth makes the merchant and tradesman patient and untiring in his arduous and perplexing pursuits. The hope of large stores of learning leads the student to deny himself the charms of society, to burn his midnight lamp, prematurely to bring pallor to his cheek, as with assiduous care he pores over his numerous tomes. The hope of once more greeting the loved ones of his home, speeds on the wayfaring man

through all the hardships and dangers of his journey. Now, should not that highest and holiest of all hopes which inspires the soldier of the cross, in like manner quicken his footsteps, embolden his heart, nerve his arm and fire his zeal, so that he shall march with a quicker step upon that way which leads him to his celestial home, to his exhaustless stores of knowledge, to his imperishable treasures of wealth, to his crown of immortal honour?

The racers in the ancient games were running for a crown; and a happy thought is that which sets forth the Christian warrior as fighting for a crown. Far before the racer, away in the distance was his laurel crown; and far before the warrior—away from his battle-strife—away above his tedious march, may hang his crown. But his crown is there, and by faith he sees it; and hope looks out for it, and looking is inflamed with the desire to wear it; and under the impulse of this strong desire, he marches on with ever quickening footsteps, waiting for his crown.

Think not to get the crown, reader, unless your hope for it impels your footsteps in the straight and narrow way, Think not to get the crown except your hope for it is purifying your heart from the remains of sin, and leading you to overcome the world. Let the hope for more of the knowledge of God and larger supplies of his grace lead



you to seek for these blessings. Let your hope for deliverance from sin and temptation impel you to resist and watch against all evil; let the hope that your prayers for the salvation of those dear to you, but still dead in trespasses and sins, may be answered, lead you to pray that they may be quickened into spiritual life; and let your hope for the coming of Christ's kingdom enlarge your heart for liberal offerings of your gold and silver, for self-denial, and for service to hasten on the glorious day.

Let your hope for the crown inspire your soul to "lay aside every weight and the sins which so easily beset you, and to run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God." "The servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent, than he that sent him." Remember the joy that is set before you; shake off your slothfulness and carnal ease; be ready for every good word and work; endure, if need be, the shame, and bear, if need be, the cross; and you will thus show both to yourself and to others, that upon your brow is bound the helmet of the faithful soldier, that its inspiring, soul-cheering power is upon you, that emblazoned on your crest is the glorious motto "Hope."

Although we have tarried so long in the survey of this piece of the panoply, we must further remark that it may be your privilege to know that this helmet is yours. There is such a thing as the "hope of assurance." "And we desire that every one of you," says the apostle, "do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." He does not limit the hope of assurance to the privileged few, but sets it forth as a thing attainable by "every one," who is truly enlisted in the armies of salvation. If within the bosom of the warrior the flame of hope burns dim, and its light is oftentimes eclipsed, this is not because of any essential defect in the nature of the grace, nor of any unwillingness to brighten that flame on the part of him who kindled it, but of the soldier himself, who has failed to give that diligence which is requisite in attaining the faith of assurance.

We do not hold, indeed, that an assured hope is in all cases a thing which will be of easy attainment at the outset of the Christian life. The babe in Christ will oftentimes be overtaken with sore doubts and fears. The nature of the spiritual conflict is as yet but imperfectly comprehended; and the untutored heart will often be shaken at first by what a larger experience will show are but a part of the inseparable difficul-

ties of the warfare, and for all which grace will be sufficient.

Some there are, who teach that if a man have this hope at all, he can but be aware of its possession ;—that if he be a Christian he must know that he is a Christian. Now we grant that if a man have a hope, he will usually know that fact. But is this hope a valid one ? May he not be trusting to some false foundation ? The question with the doubting believer is not whether he has not a hope, but it is whether he has the good hope ;—and herein lies the scene of those distressing apprehensions which so often shut out for a time the hope of assurance. The warrior may know that he wears upon his brow a helmet ; but does he always certainly know that this is the helmet which comes from the armory divine ?

But whilst, at the outset of the soldiership, doubts may naturally arise as to the genuineness of the metal of the helmet ; and though indolence and neglect of proper attention to keeping it in order, may lead with many to the recurrence of these doubts all through the march ; yet we do contend that this need not of necessity always exist, and that where the Christian lives up to his duty and his privileges, he will not always remain in distressing uncertainty as to his state of acceptance.

So common is it for professing Christians to spend their time in Doubting Castle, that being there is considered by many as an indispensable evidence to our being on pilgrimage at all. These are low views of the high vocation of the sons of God; the Master whom we serve does not require that we shall be all our lifetime in bondage to gloomy doubts and fears. In his view it adds nothing to the efficiency of his soldiers that they should be all the while more or less at a loss to know whether or not they were in his service at all. He will have "every one" of them attain the full assurance of hope, that being fully persuaded in their own minds as to who they are and what they are, they may go forth with confidence and whole-heartedness to his service.

As a matter of course, this assurance is not designed for the indolent and loitering. Such sluggards ought not to have a confidence of their calling, for they do not manifest the spirit of that vocation. A low standard of piety gives no warrant to appropriate the assurance of hope; and if you will live in conformity to the world, and in neglect of your privileges, you must be content still also to wear the bondage of doubts. In such circumstances, it is well that you should doubt. If amidst the claims which are upon you, amidst such imperative commands from the Master, such

calls from the church, from a dying world, and from your own soul, and amidst your numerous and solemn vows of entire consecration, you can still live on as a mere cold-hearted formalist, or hanger-on of the camp, you ought to doubt whether or not you have not entirely deceived yourself;—you have no right to the hope of assurance. But if, with humble devotion, constant self-denial, and ready obedience, you are striving, from a clear conscience, and a pure heart, to do the will of Him who has called you, then it is your privilege to make your calling and election sure, and you should look and pray for that entire confidence which is attained by some of the children of the kingdom. For there are those whose skies are seldom clouded, whose sense of acceptance is seldom weakened, to whom the witness of the Spirit is habitually present, and who can say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth; I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him till that day;”—who ever wear upon their brows the bright helmet of the hope of assurance.

We need only observe further, that the helmet of hope is strengthened and brightened by experience. “We glory in tribulation also,” says the apostle, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed.” It is the



nature of successful experience to impart confidence. You may have apprehensions as to the safety of the vessel in which you are embarked on an ocean voyage, or of the skill of its master, until you have been in that vessel time after time, when the tempest was sweeping the face of the deep, and seen how, with sleepless vigils, that master kept his good ship always in trim, and trained his men to stand to their posts in every time of peril; and then, trusting in God, you can lie down and sleep in peace, even though the wild surges are beating, or the hurricane howling without. The man who has just embarked in commercial pursuits may for a time be perplexed as to his every investment; but when at last he has seen that each operation has brought back a successful return, he has acquired confidence in his judgment, and now discards anxiety; for experience has given him hope. Or the soldier, when but a novice in warfare, may quail at the battle-sound, and fear both for himself and his leader; but when, at the command of that general, he has marched into a hundred battle-fields, and borne victory from all, he now hears the tocsin but as the prelude to victory, and fearlessly bares his bosom to the storm of the battle. Experience has given him hope.

So also is it with the soldier of the cross. When but a novice in grace, he has shaken at the sound of a

leaf; often has he looked upon the signal of coming strife but as his speedy death-doom;—but when, through long years, he has been accustomed to the din of the conflict, and from its tumult has always come off conqueror; when he has seen the stroke of a thousand swords fall harmless on his crest; he has learned to meet undismayed the approaching strife,—his hope has acquired confidence, his helmet has been brightened and strengthened by successful experience. Thus have you seen the veteran in the armies of Christ, whose bronzed cheek, hard-worn visage, and gray hairs, tell of his many battles; standing firm and undaunted, even though persecution was kindling its fires, or worldliness scattering abroad its too successful bribes, or temptation and sorrow coming down like a storm; because, having been through all these oftentimes before, he knows the worst, and knows that this worst need have no terrors for him;—“that even the gates of hell shall not prevail” against him; that “no weapon formed against Zion shall prosper.” His helmet has been strengthened by experience.

Reader, do you not wish to wear this glorious piece of panoply? Do you not need a well-grounded, operative, assured hope of final salvation to cheer you in your warfare? Do you not wish to wear upon your brow that helmet which no hostile strokes can ever shatter? Then,

amidst your putting on the armour, omit not the helmet of hope. Fail not to secure that which will be to you a sure defence in every time of danger; a solace in every hour of sorrow; a harbinger of a brighter day in every season of clouds and tempests; and which will enable you to go cheerfully and prosperously all your journey through, until at last you shall have reached that goal where hope shall be exchanged for fruition,—where the helmet shall give place to the crown.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE SWORD OF THE WORD.

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

THE apostle has already shown us a panoply with appointments for the entire person of the warrior ;—a girdle for the loins, a breastplate for the bosom, sandals for the feet and legs, a helmet for the head, and a shield as a safeguard for the whole man. Thus mailed, the soldier is equipped as fully as need be for mere defensive warfare. But he must also be provided with a destructive weapon, with which, when attacked, to slay his enemies, and which will enable him to do aggressive service in pushing forward the triumphs of the cross. The ancient soldier was furnished with darts, spear and sword, but the Christian sol-

dier is supplied with the sword only ;—a good and trusty weapon, which in skilful hands will do service sufficient.

In the passage before us, the apostle declares the sword of the Christian warrior to be “the word of God ;”—and the metal of that sword is shown in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the word is said to be “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Our Lord himself is assigned the title of “the Word,” yet it is obvious that in this connection the apostle is directing us to the revelation made by and through Christ as an implement of aggressive warfare. The Bible is the sword of the Christian warrior.

And surely, reader, you could not ask for a more efficient sword than this, when you remember that beyond all reasonable doubt it is a weapon of divine origin. Whatever skeptics may affirm as to the insufficiency of the testimony, by which the claims of the Scriptures to be a revelation from God are sustained, I am persuaded that after having carefully considered its credentials, you cannot discard them as defective. These claims being established by several distinct lines of testimony, each in itself conclusive, derive from their concurrent weight an accumulation of evidence such



as can be adduced in favour of no other volume; and such as might seem to be wholly irresistible to any candid mind.

That the sacred books were written by the men whose names they bear was never questioned by their cotemporaries; that the writers testify truly appears from the fact that they had the most ample opportunities for knowing the things whereof they affirm; that their simple, straightforward statements wear the intrinsic aspect of truthfulness; that they could have had no earthly reason for stating falsehoods, when such statements, as they knew, would expose them to obloquy and persecution; but that they had, on the contrary, every reason which their temporal comfort could suggest, to induce them to reject and suppress such testimony if untrue. According to every admitted standard for estimating human character, the sacred writers were good men; and if they do not testify truly, then you have the singular phenomenon of good men affirming falsehoods; or if they were not good men, then you have the still stranger phenomenon, of bad men inventing the most excellent system of morals the world has ever seen; and propagating a system which condemned themselves, at the forfeiture of every earthly comfort, and oftentimes even of their lives.

That these men were divinely commissioned is shown from the miracles they wrought in attestation of their

errand, and by their foretelling events long before they occurred, and which could have been foreseen by no human prescience. The Scriptures, too, bear upon their face the impress of their divine origin. The Bible is just such a book as it might be supposed would emanate from such a being as God. Its knowledge of human character, its provision for all possible human wants, and its peerless morality,—all attest it to be of more than mortal workmanship; whilst its actual effects in elevating character, shedding abroad through the whole social and secular world a benign and purifying influence, transforming barbarism into civilization, and changing the profane and profligate to the upright and excellent,—all these are but practical and visible testimonials to show that the teachings and the results of the Bible are coincident, and that they proceed from a source divine.

The very fact that you have the Bible to-day, is an argument irrefutable as to its divinity. Despised, and spoken against, assailed by more than a legion of powerful foes in every generation, it has still survived the attacks of malignity, the wreck of successive empires, and the ruin of every other production cotemporaneous with itself. Rest assured then, that when you open the pages of the Bible you are reading the handwriting of the Most High; that when you

ponder its teachings you are listening to a voice celestial; that when you are offered the word of God as the sword of your warfare, you are provided with an implement of heavenly workmanship.

Hence, also, you may be satisfied with the simple Scriptures as an amply sufficient weapon. Some there are, who, not content with what inspiration has recorded, seek to render the sword of the Christian warrior more complete by uniting with the teachings of revelation those also of tradition. They contend that the Spirit communicated to pious men much more than is in the sacred records; that those who thus received truth imparted it to others, and these again to others; so that there has been handed down through all successive generations a body of traditional teachings just as reliable as the written word.

You need hardly be assured that for these claims, not one whit of valid testimony can be adduced; and that in the absence of such testimony, however specious the pretensions of tradition, its teachings must be rejected as spurious. What need has revelation for the proffered aid of tradition? Are not the Scriptures of themselves a complete rule as to how we may glorify God and enjoy him for ever? Possessed of these, is not the man of God "thoroughly furnished?" "All Scripture," says Paul, "is given by

inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." If you may be perfect and thoroughly furnished for all the emergencies of your warfare without tradition, then, I ask, what need have you for resort to any such mere human appliances?

It is well, also, to observe how those who make most of tradition, make least of the Scriptures; how the teachings of tradition are exalted at the expense of those of revelation, until men now, as they did in the days of the Saviour, make void the law of God through their vain traditions.

You will remember, too, with what awful language we are warned against interfering in any manner with the handwriting of God in his word. "If any man will add unto these things," says John, "God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book." Surely, then, the sword of the Spirit will not be strengthened by additions which men may make to it. It will be hopelessly weakened. Not only its brightness, but its whole metal will be essentially

changed; so that instead of a weapon invincible, it shall become but as a sceptre of lead, without temper or sharpness, to be bent and blunted at every stroke, and to leave its deluded possessor as the prey of the devil and his legions. The pure and simple word of God is the only weapon which can successfully put to flight the hosts of darkness.

And whilst urging you to take as your sword the word of God unalloyed, you must also be reminded of the necessity of taking the entire word of God. Some professing Christians there are, who seem to reserve for themselves the privileges of eclectics; receiving just so much of the word as may suit their convenience, and practically rejecting the rest. Of this sort the number is perhaps increasing. We may presently advert to the liberties which men now feel themselves authorized to take with the Scriptures, in order to adapt them to the "improved state of society, or the modern discoveries of science." It may suffice just here to remark that there is no form of error, from the most blank infidelity to the most thorough pantheism, whose advocates have not professed to find authority for their systems in the Bible.

It is more to our present purpose to speak of the practical eclecticism of professedly evangelical Christians. How



many who are enlisted according to the avowed principles of a thoroughly gospel standard in the armies of salvation, in word or action deny that the important precepts of God's truth have any application to themselves. Those teachings which demand entire devotion, which require great self-denial, and an avoidance of even the appearance of evil, or which rebuke all conformity to the world, are thrust aside, as belonging to the apostolic and primitive times of the church, or to days when persecution calls for a higher style of piety; and thus what God has clearly written for his people in all time, is rendered void and of none effect.

Especially is it true that what are termed the doctrinal or dogmatic teachings of the Scriptures, are regarded by some professing Christians as matters which may or may not be received at discretion. Are there not some also who even boast, as if taking special credit to themselves, that as for them they know nothing of doctrines? Where is the warrant for such discrimination? By what authority is dishonour cast on that which God has revealed? Who has abrogated the curse recorded against "any man who shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy?" Are not doctrinal truths a part of the things written in the book of God? Read the Epistles to the

Romans, the Galatians, or the Hebrews;—were not these from the pen of inspiration, equally with other portions of the Bible? Strange then that any should boast that as for them, there is a part of God's word of which they know nothing; strange that they should regard it as a special mark of piety to say by implication, that there is a portion of the Bible which is unnecessary; that a soul can be sanctified by a part of the truth as well as the whole truth; or that a warrior is as well armed with a broken sword as with a perfect one.

It is a great fallacy for professedly good men to imagine, that the profounder doctrinal teachings of the Bible have no relation to practical religion. All true piety is based upon doctrinal truths. In these is laid the foundation work, on which is built that which is vital and operative. They make up the great frame-work or anatomy of the spiritual system; and on these bones are laid the muscle, sinew, artery and nerve, which complete the living man. A mere skeleton, it is true, would be but a poor pretence for a soldier; but a man without this frame-work of bones would be better fitted to take fellowship with an oyster than with an army. We have too many spiritual oysters in the camp of Israel. Zion does not need this unsubstantial, vegetating kind of the animal creation;

she rather calls for the active, walking, working men, made up of muscle, sinew, artery and nerve, built on a substantial frame-work.

In all the church of God, where has been seen such piety, as that which might be termed the *doctrino-practical*? It has been already suggested, that men may sometimes base their hopes on a mere speculative orthodoxy,—illustrating in themselves the faith which is without works; but where there is a mind thoroughly instructed in doctrinal truth, and a soul set on fire with the love of Christ, have we not the highest style of a Christian? Here is the man not for sunshine and fair weather merely, but the man of all weathers; the man not for revivals and seasons of excitement merely, but the man for revivals and for the common current course of Christian life also; the man whom you may know where to find; the man who is as undaunted amid the battle-storm, as when reposing in the triumphs of victory. For such soldiers the army of salvation calls; such is the pattern of soldiership, prescribed by the leader of the hosts for all;—a weapon made of the entire word of God is the only true and availing sword for the warfare.

Take heed to thy doctrine, is an injunction which we would do well to remember; fix well the polar stars of a

system of doctrinal truth, and they will guide your footsteps onward through many a gloomy march, or shine sweetly on you through the long vigils of the nights of sorrow. Take the whole counsel of God as your portion, and you will be furnished with a blade, before whose strokes no enemy can stand, and whose very possession will inspire your heart with dauntless and undying valor.

This weapon, as you may also perceive, is called "the sword of the Spirit." In the great scheme for conquering the powers of darkness, all the persons of the Godhead are united. Christ, the Captain of Salvation, purchased the efficacious co-operation of the Holy Ghost, whose agency is indispensable to the triumphs of the cross. The communication of the will of God to man was a most important work of this person of the Trinity. The Spirit takes "the things which are God's, and shows them unto us." "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The word of God was indited by the Spirit.

Amongst the insidious assaults which modern infidelity is making on the gospel, there are none more dangerous than the efforts to impugn the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. There have risen up of late, a class of men professedly skilled in Biblical lore, but bewildered by their

own conceits, who are unwilling to receive the Bible as inspired, both as to its language and its doctrines, by the Holy Ghost, and whose show of learning renders their pretensions the more to be dreaded. Do these assailers of the inspiration of the Scriptures not know that the terms in which truth is to be conveyed, are of almost equal practical importance with the truth itself? Of what avail will it be that truths are revealed to the minds of the penmen of the Scriptures, if, after all, this truth is to be communicated in the blundering phraseology of fallible man? Is there no need for the selection of proper terms in which truth is to be revealed, lest, after all, that truth should never reach those for whom it was designed? "Hold fast the form of sound words," is a divine injunction.

Or, if the inspiration of the Scriptures is not plenary, but partial, then how are we to fix the limit, so as to understand what is and what is not inspired? Do not such assumptions virtually overthrow the inspiration of the whole Bible? And who is authorized to gainsay the declaration of God himself, who says, "*All* Scripture is given by inspiration?" Rest assured that, no matter what the pretensions to piety and learning, the assailers of plenary inspiration are most efficiently doing the work of infidelity.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." It is



not necessary for us to understand the exact method by which the Spirit made known divine truth to the inspired penmen. We can easily believe that the same God who created the human mind, could hold with that mind any communication which he might desire. He could speak to prophets and apostles in audible words; he could represent truth in impressive dreams and visions; he could write it on tablets of stone; or he could suggest it silently but powerfully to the understanding, accompanied by such testimonials as would prove it a communication from heaven;—and by all these methods were holy men of old moved to make those records which in all coming time were to stand as the revealed will of God to man. Thus were the pages of the Bible written; and as it was the Holy Ghost who communicated these teachings, the word of God is fitly termed “the sword *of the Spirit.*”

This appellation appears still more appropriate, too, when you remember that the agency of the Spirit alone can give such efficacy to the word as to render it an available weapon. Of itself, the word of God would remain a dead letter. Unless moved by the Holy Ghost, none would be disposed to use it; and if so disposed, it would not be effectual in putting to flight the armies of the adversary. “The natural mind discerneth not the things of the Spirit, because

they are spiritually discerned." How many are there, who have possessed the Bible all their lives long,—had it in their houses, and been taught it from their childhood, in whose hearts the enemy is still unsubdued, and who are still led captive by the devil at his will. To such this sword has always been a sheathed weapon. Hence the Holy Ghost must accompany the truth, to give it power and energy. He must open the eyes of the spiritually blind to behold the excellence and utility of this weapon, and incline the affections to take pleasure in using it for vanquishing the powers of darkness in the soul and in the world without; he must bend the will to determination and perseverance in using it to push forward the aggressions of the armies of light. Without this agency, none would ever be disposed to enlist as soldiers of the cross, and when enlisted, their puny efforts would be fruitless.

Peter might doubtless a thousand times have preached just such a sermon as fell from his lips on the day of Pentecost, and, without the co-operation of the Spirit, it would have fallen as an idle tale on the dull ears of his auditors; but, when the Spirit came with power divine, and took the word from his lips, brandishing it on every side, and thrusting it with unerring aim into the hearts of the King's enemies, that sermon from Peter became the weapon by

which three thousand souls were in one day captured from the hosts of darkness. The prophet might have spoken ever so long to the dry bones in the valley of vision, and they would still have lain stark and cold before him; but no sooner did the Spirit breathe upon them, than bone returned to bone, sinew to sinew, and the bleached skeletons of the valley stood up an army of living men. John Livingston may have often spoken to his dying hearers in the same strain in which he preached on that memorable day of his ministry at the church of Shotts; but John Livingston had wrestled long in prayer for the quickening power of the Holy Ghost to attend his words; and when his lips were opened, the Spirit came and used the truth with such effect, that under that one sermon five hundred souls were hopefully won over to the standard of his Prince and Saviour. Whitefield, Edwards, Baxter, and all the ministers of modern times most successful in the conversion of sinners, have been men eminent for their piety, their near and constant communion with heaven, and the copious and powerful demonstrations of the Spirit which accompanied their labours.

Have you not yourself often seen both the necessity for the Spirit's agency and his power? Here are those who had for years been sitting under the sound of the gospel, without

any visible impression of its saving energy,—cold, stupid, lifeless, “dead in trespasses and sins.” At length the Spirit came with the word to their understandings and consciences. They were straightway pierced to the very heart; they cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” they laid down their weapons of rebellion, and sued for pardon and acceptance from a despised and injured Saviour; they were astonished at the charms of his kingdom; and joyfully enlisting in his service, became henceforth faithful soldiers instead of bitter foes. The Holy Ghost gave power and energy to the truth; the word of God was the sword of the Spirit.

The great need of the church, of the ministry, of every reader and hearer of the Bible’s teachings, then, is the need of the Holy Spirit. If he but attend that truth, it will not be spoken, or heard, or read in vain; it will accomplish that whereunto it was sent; it will go forth conquering and to conquer; it will show itself to be a weapon of divine workmanship—that word of God which is “the sword of the Spirit.”

## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE SWORD OF THE WORD.

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

A most important weapon is the sword of the Christian soldier, in promoting the great ends of his warfare. It is the chief instrument by which the work of extending the kingdom is accomplished. Some of its offices in this regard, we may examine in the present chapter.

The word of God is the primary instrument, as we have just seen, by which recruits are won to the armies of salvation. Other instrumentalities the Master does indeed use for making conquests to his cause from the ranks of the enemy, but these are all subordinate to that of the word. The word informs the understanding by communicating important facts. To its teachings are we indebted for a distinct knowledge of the being and nature of God; of his



government and laws; of man and his relations by nature to God; of eternity and the two-fold existence beyond the grave; and more than all, of the plan of salvation through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The primary truths as to God's existence and some of his attributes, may be learned indeed from the great book of nature, whose leaves are spread out to be read by universal humanity. The fact of a future existence may be deduced from the speculations of an intelligent philosophy; but for definite and reliable information on this point, and especially for all that pertains to Calvary, with its correlative graces of faith and repentance; for instructions as to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord; for a transcript of the judgment of heaven and of hell;—for all these indispensable truths we are indebted to that gospel which has “brought life and immortality to light.” Beyond doubt all such information will prove a “savour of death unto death,” unless attended by the life-giving power of the Spirit; but these truths are the instruments used by the Holy Ghost in much of his work of illumination; and for this reason the word of God may be called “the sword of the Spirit.”

The word is the instrument used by the Spirit in the work of conviction and conversion. The entire work ac-

complished in our translation from the kingdom of darkness into that of God's dear Son, is not indeed accomplished through the agency of the truth. The great change of regeneration is wrought by a direct and independent acting of the Spirit on the soul. Some affirm the agency of the truth even in the immediate work of regeneration. They contend that what men need is light; that the Spirit accompanying the word gives this light; and that under such a presentation of truth the soul is renewed. But, in order to bring men from the death in trespasses and sins to spiritual life, something more than light is needed. Devils have more light than men;—in this respect they have no essential deficiency, but devils, although they believe and tremble, are not regenerated. Many a soul has been powerfully illuminated under the agency of the truth as used by the Spirit, while the greater the illumination, the greater has been the exhibition of hostility and resistance. The radical defect is with the soul itself. There is here an organic derangement; and until this be rectified, it is vain to hope for any right performance of its spiritual functions. Hence whatever may be the agency of the truth in the preliminary stages of conversion,—however indispensable its offices in informing, impressing and convicting, when the great radical change of the heart itself is to be wrought, the truth fails in its power as an agent, and the

soul can only be re-created by the same direct divine power by which it was created at first.

We must not, however, derogate from the important offices performed by the truth in the hands of the Spirit. Without this preliminary work, ordinarily the soul would never be brought into that condition in which the Spirit accomplishes its regeneration. Through the truth the realities of eternal things are brought home to the soul; through the truth the strictness, spirituality, and immutability of God's law is enforced; through the truth is induced a personal sense of guiltiness and condemnation, of a lost and hopeless condition by nature; through the truth the need of a Saviour and the adaptation of that Saviour to the wants of the sinner are impressed; and thus is the law made a "school-master to bring us to Christ."

The Captain of Salvation sends out the word, thundering the curses of Sinai, holding up the wrath of an angry God, uncovering the evil and loathsomeness of sin, displaying the peace-speaking, blood-stained banner of the cross, until under the power of the Spirit, the hostility of those who have been his enemies is subdued, and they are brought to his feet as willing trophies of his grace. Thus, by the truth are recruits won from the kingdom of darkness to that of

God's dear Son; and thus also does the word of God prove to be "the sword of the Spirit."

The word of God is also the great agent in the sanctification of the Christian soldier. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth," was the prayer of the Saviour for such as had believed on his name, and whom he was about to leave in this world; and the prayer also for as many as should afterwards believe on his name. From the pages of inspiration were his wayfaring people ever to learn lessons of wisdom and holiness; here were they all their journey through to be making new discoveries as to the evils remaining within them to be conquered; here they were to receive instructions as to the ordering of their march, to hear motives to call them into action, and listen to the promises of consolation given for their encouragement and support by the way; and thus ever learning,—becoming ever wiser, they were to die more and more unto sin and live unto holiness;—they were to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, until they attained the full stature, strength, and experience of manhood in Christ Jesus.

How important the word of God, too, as a refuter of error. Ever since the Bible has been in the world, there have been those ready, either directly or indirectly, to nul-

lify its teachings. At every article of faith or practice have their shafts been aimed. They have denied to Christ a place in the Godhead; they have exalted other intercessors to take part in his mediation, and virtually set aside his work; they have disowned the native depravity of the soul and its inability; they have invented a system of ordinances, sacraments, and priests, which, although bearing the outward impress of the Scriptures, and speaking something of its language, has been another gospel; they have cried Hosannas to philosophy, falsely so called, and crucified the truth as it is in Jesus; they have dug down into the earth's bowels, bringing out old fossils, or gone into museums of anatomy, and bringing out human bones, have endeavoured to make the fossils and the human bones declare the Bible to be a lie. But all the while the Bible has had its friends to stand by it; and although the greater part of those who have remained steadfast in their love for its simple truths have not been amongst the great ones of the earth, yet it has been able to point to such as Newton, Locke, Milton, Boyle, men neither unknown nor unhonored in the world, who have been ready to sit as children whilst inspiration was speaking, and to show to those who had not, like themselves, penetrated the arcana of science, that all true science and philosophy are but the handmaids of



the religion of the gospel. Amidst all the progress in philosophy, science and the arts; amidst all the so-called improvements of society, through the long sweep of centuries, the Bible has still not only kept pace with the onward march of human things, but has been ever in the van; to be at times taunted by them, indeed, in their infancy, but in their maturity to master them and make them its servants.

But for the pure and simple word of God—but for this mighty sword of the Spirit; where would be the Christian soldier in time of these multifarious onsets from the regions of error? Unlearned, perhaps, in the logic of the schools, a stranger to the fields of human science, he cannot in kind refute the enemies of the truth, the Saviour and himself; but he can turn to the pages of that volume of the word, and in the simple grandeur of those teachings,—in their adaptation to the wants and experience of his own soul, he shall hear a voice, which, above all the mutterings of the schools, will prove them to his satisfaction to be divine. “My sheep hear my voice,” says Christ, “and follow me.”

Then, also, the tutored, skilled and valiant soldier of the cross, whose education has fitted him for grappling all forms of speculative truth and error, here finds also his lessons of wisdom. From the storehouse of revelation he brings out

truth after truth, arranging them in order and harmony; showing them to be consistent with each other, with a sound philosophy, with the wants of mankind, and with the nature of God himself; and hurls headlong the vain pretensions of errorists, with his "Thus saith the Lord,"—doing battle manfully for his master, until error is forced to hide its confounded head, and truth stands in lofty majesty vindicated, through the good service done by the word of God as "the sword of the Spirit."

We have adverted briefly to the ends for which the word of God is to be used; it will be proper also to attend somewhat to the manner in which the Christian soldier is to use this sword of his warfare.

Obviously, the word of God should be carefully, habitually, and prayerfully studied by every professed follower of Christ. It is in the pages of the Bible that he beholds the image, marks the footsteps, and hears the voice of his glorious leader; and no soldier can be faithful to his calling who does not keep up constant communion between the pages of the Bible and his own soul. "Search the Scriptures," says Christ, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life;"—pass not over their pages thoughtlessly, hastily, irreverently; but with humble diligence and docility search them to find out their meaning,—to know what the will of

God is concerning you, and concerning the great interests of his kingdom.

Bible-reading is so plain and palpable a duty of every friend of the Saviour, that barely to mention it in the enumeration of Christian duties might to some seem sufficient. But, palpable as is this duty, have we no reason to apprehend its neglect by a large number, and its superficial discharge by an equally large number even of those who are professedly enlisted in the spiritual warfare? A few chapters on the Sabbath, or one occasionally during the week, suffices even for some professing Christians. Instead of an hour each morning with the Bible, how many spend the first available morning hour with the newspaper. Politics, commerce, agriculture, literature, or fiction, can furnish reading which easily interests; but the momentous themes of the Bible are practically regarded as of little consequence. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, seeking helps to find out its meaning, meditating on what is understood, fixing a certain portion for daily perusal, so that the entire word may be read and re-read through all the life long, these are indeed matters of moment to some, but matters of apparent indifference to many in the armies of Zion. The press of business is allowed to consume the time due to such sacred employments; sleep, daily bread, and the toil of life, with

perhaps a very limited interval reserved for prayer—these fill up the week of too large a number of Christ's professed followers; whilst their Bibles, could they but speak, would tell a sad tale of neglect.

A long life in the whirl of business may have been unfavourable to cultivating a taste for reading of any description; but such tastes should be rectified, and especially as regards God's holy word. A plea such as this will not avail. Are the cares of your daily calling so pressing as not to allow a portion of time daily for Bible reading and meditation? then about the arrangements of that calling there is some radical defect. According to God's plan, it is impossible that regular and lawful employments can properly interfere with devotional duties; for as his claims come first, these must be first attended to; and then all earthly things must come afterwards. No man ever lost in his business by devoting a portion of every day to the study of his Bible. Or is your mind so absorbed in the pursuits of the world, that when you sit down over the sacred pages, although your eyes are passing over the letters, your thoughts are wandering still to the counting-house or others of the scenes of time, so that what you have read might almost as well have been unread? Then rest assured the world has too strong a hold upon your heart, and you have

reason to ponder that passage, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Be not content, reader, unless each day of your life you set apart a portion of time for searching the Scriptures. Fix some special hour for this sacred employment; and let that appointment, as far as in you lies, be immutable. In your travels abroad as well as in your sojourn at home, forget it not; let your Bible be your constant companion. Avail yourself of the helps for understanding it, afforded by men who have devoted learning and life to explaining what the will of the Lord in his word is. And with a mind thus tutored; with precept, promise and pious example treasured up in your heart; you will be armed for the warfare, and be able to do good service for the Master. In all time of temptation, depression, sorrow, conflict, or in your long marches, you will have about you a good and trusty weapon, to parry the assaults of the devil and make aggressions on his ranks, girded as you will be with "the sword of the Spirit."

This weapon of our warfare must also be used through the preaching of the word. "By the foolishness of preaching" it is, that God "saves them that believe." "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel," was the Saviour's great commission to his church. You must



at least be a hearer of the word, and a constant, attentive, docile hearer too. Not simply to listen to well-turned periods, or to be moved by appeals to the imagination and sensibilities,—not to criticise and cavil, must we go up to the sanctuary. Does the faithful soldier spend his time in critiques upon the terms in which are couched the orders from his commander-in-chief? or on the tones with which such orders are delivered? Not to hear for others but for yourself must you go to the sanctuary;—not to say, this is for that person, and that for another, without ever thinking whether these and all other wholesome truths are not for your own soul. Does the good soldier hear all the commands of his chief but to transfer them to his companions in arms, reserving none for himself? or does he not hear as if in all the ranks there were no other soldier than himself?

From all gospel preaching, however simple the language, or unattractive the manner, we may gain something for our spiritual profit. From that pulpit God is speaking, though it be through an earthen vessel; and who will say that when God speaks we may not learn lessons of wisdom? Happy the hearer who is always gleaning instruction even in the most barren fields opened to him from the pulpit; happy the hearer whose footsteps never return from the house of God, but that he feels it has

been good for him to be there,—that by once more waiting on the Lord his sword has been sharpened, and he has been better armed for the warfare.

Perhaps it may be your duty to use the sword of the Spirit, by yourself standing up as a preacher of the word. You do not know that you are called to the ministry? Once this was true of all who have ever proclaimed the glad news of salvation. Never will you know whether you are not called, until humbly, prayerfully and diligently you have asked, in this respect, the question, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Ambition, lucre, carnal ease, for the present, may offer superior attractions, and plead hard against the self-denying service of the ministry; but the message to you may still be, “Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the gospel.”

Have you been truly converted? have you an education, or is the way accessible for obtaining one? are there no insurmountable obstacles to your engaging in this work? have you a heart for such service?—then there may be a “woe” to you if you preach not the gospel. Prefer some secular and less arduous employment you may; favoured by ambition, lucre, and carnal comfort, you may be; but, withholding your hand from this great good, when it is in the power of that hand to do it, with all your gettings you will get lean-

ness of soul, and you will not get the favour of God on your ways.

Loud are the Macedonian cries for help coming to the church from this and from all lands. Wide are the doors now opened for the entrance of the armies of light. Old partition walls are breaking down; revolutions are leveling the mountains and bringing up the valleys, and preparing the highway whereon may march the serried hosts of Calvary to the conquest of the nations. Take heed lest, slighting the message to go and preach the gospel, your skirts be found stained with the blood of the perishing!

Or, are you a parent? Has God given you children? then it may be your calling to train up one or more of these to be preachers of the word. To train up all of them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is a patent method of using the "sword" which God has put into your hands; but, like the mother of Samuel, or the mother of Mills, to devote your infant offspring to the Saviour for the service of the ministry, may be the honoured employment with which the Head of the Church has favoured you. Some among the professed followers of Christ, it is said there are, who would greatly prefer seeing their sons in legislative halls, in Congress, at the bar, in the office of the healing art, or almost anywhere else than in the pulpit.

Thanks be to God such are not all. The youthful son of one who stood high in the naval service of the country, was once asked, in the presence of his father, if he did not intend to be an officer in the navy. The father promptly replied, "Sir, I wish my boy to be a minister of the gospel;" and when asked if he would prefer that his son should be a minister rather than engage in his own profession; he added, "I consider the office of the ministry the highest office upon earth; I would rather see my son a faithful and successful minister than see him chief magistrate of this great republic." Would that there were many like-minded! Would that like the mother of Samuel or of Mills, or the father of this boy, there were throughout the Zion of God on earth, parents who would feel it their highest honour to rear up their children for using the sword of the Spirit, as faithful preachers of the gospel of Christ.

You can at least aid in the extensive use of this sword, by contributing from your substance to raise up and sustain a ministry adequate to the wants of the church and the world. Whether possessed of much or little of this world's goods, you are but a steward, and he whose are the silver and the gold, claims at least a portion of your substance to be used directly in building up his kingdom. But a widow's mite may make up your whole living; then by casting that

into the Lord's treasury you may exercise a benevolence larger and more precious in the eyes of him who seeth not as man seeth, than the rich men whose names are most honoured as the patrons of charity. To some you may seem to possess but one single talent, and that talent may be for making money; but if that talent be sanctified so that on all your gold and silver is written "Holiness to the Lord," you may so trade with the one talent that it may assume the value of ten, and in the work of advancing the kingdom of Christ you may bear a part, than which, few can be more honourable or attended with more blessed results.

Some must always stand in the forefront of battle, some must be file-leaders of the hosts, some must go on daring and distant marches to the dark lands where are planted the strong fortresses of Satan; but others must stay by the stuff, and do foraging for the army, and by toiling to furnish supplies for the hosts, as really take part in the scenes of warfare and of victory, as if themselves actually wielding the sword amidst the strife, or as if going afar off to storm the old bulwarks of the devil. Various offices are there in the armies of light, and by toiling in the counting-house, in the shop, or on the farm, to secure wherewith to help on the hosts in the warfare, you can most effectually,



if not in person, by proxy at least, use the word of God as “the sword of the Spirit.”

We must not omit to notice among the methods for using the word of God as the weapon of our warfare, the power of the press. Amongst all the trophies which human invention has laid at the feet of the Saviour, for doing his work of giving knowledge to mankind, there has been perhaps no more valuable offering than the power of multiplying, perpetuating and scattering abroad the truth by the press. The press seems to give, even to the frail and finite sons of men, in a limited sense, the attributes of ubiquity and earthly immortality. It takes the words, which, had they but fallen from the speaker's lips, might have died almost with the voice that gave them utterance, stamps them upon the page, renders them perpetual, translates them into various languages,—reviving as it were the Pentecostal gift of speaking in unknown tongues,—and sends them into various and distant lands all the world over, to tell their story to men whom he who uttered them has never seen nor shall see until the great judgment-day. Then, when the man of God has finished his work on earth, and passed from his labours away to his eternal rest; the press still keeps him here on earth entreating, instructing, and warning; and often to greater

purpose than when he was on earth and doing good in person.

Eighteen hundred years ago, at Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, Athens, Rome,—all around the sacred or classic shores of the Mediterranean, apostolic footsteps trod, and apostolic lips spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and though the long lapse of all these centuries has passed since those lips were sealed in death, apostolic teachings still live, and in the same strains which were heard at Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Rome, they still speak to you and me,—speak in this land to them unheard of and unknown. They speak in capitals which long since their day have risen up to greatness and bowed their knee to the once dishonoured Nazarene,—they speak to the Chinaman, the Hottentot, and the dwellers in the islands of the sea; they speak to all by the power of the press. And speak on they shall, through the press as well as by the ministry, until there shall be “no speech nor language where their voice is not heard;”—until not one son or daughter of Adam shall have occasion to say to his neighbour, “Know thou the Lord, for all shall know him, from the least even to the greatest.”

An amazing enginery for using the word is this, reader; through its agency what may you not accomplish for your

Lord and Master? Perhaps you may be able yourself to speak through the press. If not, can you not by the varied instrumentalities familiar to the Christian world scatter abroad the teachings of others? Can you not either in person or by your contributions, or by both, send far and wide the Bible now furnished so cheap, or the numerous, admirable, and useful books and tracts, teaching again the great truths of the Bible, and also furnished so cheap,—so that alongside the missionary, and perhaps at times, as the forerunner of the missionary, may go the press, doing battle mightily for our Lord and for his Christ.

Let not your own soul, then, let not the world remain in spiritual darkness. Search the Scriptures; preach the gospel, send abroad the truth,—by some means employ diligently, faithfully, and constantly the message divine, that the strongholds of Satan may be pulled down, that the kingdom of Christ may be built up, and the word of God have free course and be glorified. Become more familiar with your Bible; dispense its influence more freely abroad, and you will not only have an increase of light and comfort in your own soul, but will do better service in the armies of salvation, as a soldier of the cross.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE SPIRIT FOR THE WARFARE.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

HAVING exhibited the armour with which the Christian soldier must be arrayed for his conflicts, the apostle now calls our attention to the spirit with which the warfare must be carried on. You are not to go forth at your own charges or in your own strength; you must remember who was the artificer of this panoply and from whom you received it; and upon Him you must call for wisdom to guide your footsteps, and for strength to nerve your hand. Your eye is ever to be fixed steadily upon the great Captain of Salvation, with the profound consciousness that it

is in Him only that you can hope for success. He alone can lead you on safely and surely to battle and to victory.

You will not wonder at an announcement such as this. Is not the soldier the servant of his leader? must he not hear his voice, submit to his will, and follow his footsteps to conflict or to triumph? Why then should not you show the same allegiance, soldier of the cross as you are, and obey the injunction of him who has called you to put the armour on, by "praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

Whatever may be the character of other military men, the Christian soldier must be a man of prayer. This will appear both from his own wants, and from the character of the Captain of his salvation.

Among your wants we may point to your weakness. You have a great battle to wage against a great enemy. The serried hosts of Marathon or Waterloo, drawn out in long and splendid array, might well have appalled even an experienced soldier whose office called him to draw his sword for that desperate battle-strife; but the hosts of Marathon and Waterloo were trifles compared with the principalities and powers with which you must contend. And what are you against such a gigantic enemy;—an enemy whose legions are almost countless, whose adroit-



ness and long experience are unequalled amongst all God's creatures, and whose long marches have been signalized with such numberless victories? What are you in yourself but dust and ashes, but a poor, weak, helpless worm—in your natural state fitly described by inspiration as “without strength,” and even when introduced into the kingdom of God's dear Son, still constrained to say, “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing:” “when I would do good, evil is present with me.”

Utterly imbecile as to the conquest of your own evil passions, how can you in your own strength stand against the principalities and powers, and wiles of the devil? If the patriarch was compelled to cry out when trouble came upon him, “All these things are against me,” how much more appropriate such language to the lips of the frail soldier of the cross, when he looks out upon the long hosts of the evil one, drawn up to crush him! How appropriate, too, that instead of quailing before this formidable array, and sheathing his sword; making an inglorious retreat, or allowing himself to be taken into even temporary captivity; he should turn his eye from his enemy to his helper, from his weakness to his strength; and, calling on the great Captain of his salvation, advance manfully to the struggle, crying out in the full confidence

of victory, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The necessity for prayer to the Christian soldier, appears also from his ignorance. However much he may have known and sadly felt of the wiles of the devil, he has not yet learned the whole of his devices. Satan's empire is a deep abyss;—it is a school in which, however large your experience, you will still be a learner to your dying day. As regards many of the wiles of Satan, and many of the purposes of God's providence and grace, we are the veriest babes.

What know you of the future even in this life? How much can you tell of to-morrow, and what it may bring forth?—what shall be its joys, its sorrows, its toils, its conflicts? Is there sunshine on your path to-day; are you sure you will not be a mourning pilgrim amidst clouds and storms to-morrow? "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Every day brings with it a thousand reasons why you should call upon the Captain of your salvation for wisdom in your warfare. You know not where the enemy will next be met, whether he will assault you in the open field, or spring from a dangerous ambush, or endeavour to deceive under the cover of feigned friendship. You cannot know,

therefore, how best to guard against his wiles, nor what weapons will be most successful in turning back his forces. Trusting to your own wisdom, you will be ever falling into temptations and snares, and getting to yourself sore discomfiture and bitter sorrows. You will heedlessly run into the very scenes most dangerous to your weak points. You will expose yourself to the very causes which will most powerfully excite your besetting sins; and be careless and unguarded when danger stands thickest around, and the enemy is just upon you. You will be ever sinning and repenting, but to sin and repent again;—now perhaps a victor, and now a mourning captive. Christian soldier, must you not have light upon your path? must you not hear the voice of your great leader saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it?” must you not acknowledge him in all your ways, that he may direct your steps? Then you must pray “always with all prayer.”

Your own past experience should be argument enough to show the necessity of calling on the Captain of Salvation for wisdom and strength in the warfare. How often have you learned your weakness and ignorance from your own experience, as well as from the declarations of God’s word. You have been satisfied with your own wisdom and discretion in some emergency, and trusting your own heart have

found trouble and sorrow as the result. The illusions of the deceitful world have proved too much for you, and far into its follies and cares you have gone;—far from the path of duty and of peace, far from the light of the Saviour's countenance. Indwelling corruptions have courted indulgence; and their proposals have been at first repulsed, then dallied with in thought, and at last perhaps committed in the overt act. Satan, too, has been busy all the while with other of his agencies than the world and the flesh; and to your sorrow you have learned, practically, your weakness and ignorance, and the power of the enemy leagued against you. Why not, then, learn lessons from the painful remembrances of the past? Experience is a valuable teacher; listen to her instructions. In all your conflicts feel that in order to come off conqueror, you must in humble faith and confidence call upon God by prayer.

These considerations are further enforced by the character of the Captain of your salvation.

He is, first of all, able to understand perfectly your wants. As God, he is omniscient. He needs not that any shall tell him what is in man. He is acquainted thoroughly with the human heart, that greatest of all enigmas, even to him in whose bosom it beats. He is familiar with your entire past history;—knows all your trials, conflicts, falls.

He sees all the future. Every circumstance of your coming life, although to yourself enshrouded in impenetrable mystery, is to him all naked and open,—all its joys and sorrows, all its temptations, dangers and triumphs. He knows perfectly your individual disposition and character;—your weak points, besetting sins, susceptibilities for usefulness. How infinitely well is such a being prepared to furnish the wisdom you so much lack; how would his perfect knowledge compensate for your ignorance! How safely and confidently you might march against any foe at his command! How sweet to feel that under the guidance of such a leader you may go forth to toils and dangers, with the full assurance that you are in paths of righteousness; and knowing that he that walketh uprightly walketh safely. What soldier would not desire always to keep steadily in view, and ever hear the voice, of the great Captain who always knows and always requires only that which is right?

Consider, also, that the Captain of your salvation is possessed of infinite power. The strength and ability to carry out their purposes with all creatures is limited. Some possess this attribute in larger measure than others, but with all it has its bounds. But your leader is divine, and with him all things are possible. “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which is



made." He has power over angels, and could have called ten legions to do his bidding, even amidst his poverty and sorrows when on earth. He has power over men, and can save or can destroy;—can say to the most daring opposer of his kingdom, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further." He has power over Satan, and has quelled him in his attempts upon himself, and conquered him in the hearts of all the glorified saints above; he has power over death, having burst its bars, and led captivity captive; he has universal control, and "maketh all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." He has power to forgive sins, and to put all the enemies of himself and his people under him; for "he shall reign until he hath put all things under his feet." Now, Christian soldier, what think you of a leader such as this? Why may you not with confidence follow one whose power is matchless, and whose ultimate victory must be certain, against any and all enemies? How well suited is he to your necessities; how his strength is made perfect in your weakness; how, following Christ, you may go fearlessly at his call into any danger, knowing that greater is he that is for you than those that are against you,—that, however vast the apparent odds, and hard the struggle, and dark the day, in the end you will be brought off conqueror,

and more than conqueror, through him that loved you. How important, then, to keep ever near your all-powerful leader,—to be much at the mercy seat—to “pray always with all prayer and supplication.”

We are further encouraged to call on God our Saviour in the midst of our spiritual march, by the fact that he has a heart of the most tender sensibilities and sympathies. This cannot always be said of those to whose hands the soldier's services and welfare are committed. The martial spirit amongst men has not usually been favourable to the cultivation of the tender emotions. Hardship and familiarity with suffering and death, have often made the veteran leader callous to the enormous woes which his profession involves; or selfishness and towering ambition have made him willing to pour out human blood without measure and without pity. So is it not with him in whose service you are enlisted. No stoical indifference, no blunted sensibilities, no haughty reserve, no towering ambition, inducing recklessness to all mortal woes—none of these belong to the Captain of our salvation. Though all-powerful, and all-wise, he is ready to stoop to the poorest and meanest of his followers, and to sympathize with all his trials. He has a heart that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: having been in all points tempted like as we

are, yet without sin. He was made perfect for his office by passing through the ordeal of sorrow. He has himself been on the field, and in the hardest of the fight; and though seemingly conquered for a season, came off a glorious victor; and, remembering this, he feels for all his faithful followers, who, in pursuing his footsteps, are striving against the powers of darkness. Strong temptations from Satan and the world, the hidings of his Father's face, intense physical anguish, and the bitterest cups of mental sorrow—all these have been his own; and, though now enthroned above, he has neither forgotten these, nor forgotten the humble faithful ones who are coming after him through much tribulation.

His, too, is no common sympathy;—he is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother. His love does not end in mere profession; he has shown it practically, in his exile from heaven, his life of poverty, and in the pains and dishonours of Gethsemane and Calvary. Are you tempted, desponding, sorrowing, suffering in mind, body or estate? Are you wrestling hard against the principalities and powers of Satan, or against the cravings of flesh and blood? Does the battle seem long—the odds much against you—the result uncertain, and your helpers far away? Soldier of the cross, thy conflicts are not unseen nor unpitied—thy

helper is not far away; thy sorrows will not be greater than thou canst bear, nor thy foes prove too much for thee. Although unseen by mortal eyes, he who called you from darkness to light is very near you; he has a feeling for your infirmities, and declares he will never leave nor forsake you.

Wherever duty may call you, whether it be to labour for Christ in your own or in other lands; whatever may be the nature of the hardships, trials, and sorrows you encounter, still there remains this promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The glorious Captain of Salvation hovers ever around his moving militant hosts, warning the unruly, comforting the feeble-minded, supporting the weak, and exercising great patience towards all;—now leading them in green pastures and beside still waters, and making a table for them even in the presence of their enemies; and now cheering them on with his sweet voice when the storm of battle thunders loudest; and tenderly caring for them by binding up and mollifying the wounds of those that have been pierced by the fiery darts of the evil one.

That your leader should be all-wise and all-powerful would seem to offer irresistible reasons for enlisting in his service, and ever obeying his commands with the utmost confidence and cheerfulness; but when he is also all tender-

ness and sympathy for his militant hosts, surely he has claims upon your devotion altogether beyond our highest conception. Not call upon a leader such as this, amidst the fight with flesh and blood, and the powers of the devil? not seek from him wisdom and grace? not keep your eye always upon him, and your ear always open to catch the first accents of his voice? This cannot be. If you are enlisted as his follower in sincerity and truth, you will have felt the drawings of his tenderness, as well as seen the triumphs of his power; you will have learned to cry unto him as your ever-present helper; and will thus in some measure have fulfilled the injunction to pray "always with all prayer and supplication."



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE SPIRIT FOR THE WARFARE.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

THE soldier in the armies of salvation must not only learn to pray, but as the apostle teaches us, he must “pray always.” The powers against which he wages his warfare are so formidable and vigilant, that he must never cease to call for help on Him who alone can inspire his heart with courage, and nerve his arm for victory. The Christian must pray “always.”

Not literally must he pray always; for then he could have no time to take necessary food and rest; nor to pursue an honest calling and thereby provide for his household; nor even time for hearing or speaking the

word, or doing works of charity, or discharging other obligations of the spiritual soldier. In all these things you can and ought to glorify God just as really as in praying. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

But the apostle means, that we must always breathe the spirit of prayer. We must be in constant readiness for uttering the language of prayer, always in our place where prayer is wont to be offered, and of course frequent in the exercise of this gift. In order properly to carry out the injunction to pray always, it will be necessary of course that

You should pray in the sanctuary. Not audibly, indeed, in the great congregation, unless we may be ministers doing the offices of the sanctuary, but in your heart you may and ought to pray, as did Hannah when wrestling with God, even though your lips move not as did Hannah's. In the depths of your spirit there may be strivings harder, and utterings louder in the ear of heaven, than any that are seen or heard of men. The Spirit of God can be worshipped in spirit and in truth, in the long-drawn yearnings of the inmost soul, as really as with the bended knee, and the petitions poured from eloquent lips; and in the spirit, at least, you should join in the

prayers of the sanctuary. These sanctuary services are the drillings of the troops. Here they burnish their weapons and gird them on afresh, receive lessons of wisdom and inspirations of valor, hear new orders for the camp and the field, and not unfrequently have at least skirmishes with the enemy. Why then should not all from their hearts pray in the sanctuary?

Rarely is there to be seen amongst those calling themselves Christians, a spectacle more unbecoming the profession and the occasion, and to our apprehension more displeasing in the sight of God, than to see those who have named the name of Jesus, with eyes wandering like the fools, with an attitude of irreverence, and with obviously no feeling in common with the language which is uttered in the prayers of the sanctuary. The minister is not to do all the praying for the people. God admits no human proxy here. Not only the minor officers along the ranks, but the whole hosts are to join in the yearnings of the soul, and the outgoings of faith, love, and penitence, in the callings upon God in his house. Like the great armies of the middle ages, marching to the rescue of the land of the Messiah from the rule of the infidel, or like the army of Cromwell in the midst of the work they felt commissioned to do for God, the hosts of the militant church must, when

summoned to the courts of the sanctuary, with one accord prostrate themselves before the Lord their Maker.

The Christian soldier must also pray in the more private and social assemblies of God's people. As the disciples were met together on the morning of Pentecost, or as the many who were gathered together praying for Peter and for themselves at the house of Mary the mother of John, so must the followers of Christ now meet together in one place for united prayer. We are, from our nature, social beings; we are accustomed to go together to do evil; in seeking worldly pleasures we mingle in social bands; why not introduce the social element also into the employments of the spiritual kingdom? Not only do our very natures, however, sanction the authority of God's word on this subject, but observation and experience teach its necessity and importance. How often has the weak, desponding saint gone to the circles where he was wont to meet his brethren in prayer, with sorrow of heart, and come away with joy and gladness. How often has his spirit sunk within him when he looked over the desolations of Zion, and the triumphs of the evil one, until he had tested the promise that where two or three were met together there the Master would be; and then he has come away contented under the assurance that the God of grace is also the God of provi-

dence; that He sees all this flood of evil, and hates sin more, and loves the kingdom of his Son far more than we do; and that we may safely trust all these things to him, believing that he doeth all things well. What individual church prospers so much as that in which the humble followers of the Saviour are accustomed stately, numerously, and spiritually, to meet together for social prayer? The members of these praying circles are tried veterans; they make up the life-guard of the army. If you would be constant, faithful, and reliable, as are they, let not your place be vacant in the place for social prayer.

The family circle is also a most fit place for prayer. Endearments bind together the members of the same household,—sharers of the same flesh and blood, which are found of the same kind and to the same degree nowhere else on earth. The dwellers in this common home, too, have a common share in the blessings and the trials which befall their habitation. They are fed at the same board, repose under the same roof, and the joys and sorrows of one are very much the joys and sorrows of the group. What a place those parents hold, too, in this little empire. How their words have power, and their will is law, and their very footsteps are walked in; and how those whom God has given them are prized beyond all earthly things, as the



jewels of their casket. Where, where on all this footstool of the dispenser of our mercies, should God be acknowledged, if not here? Shall not the voice of gratitude and praise ascend from that board spread with plenty, and around an altar reared for the morning and the evening's sacrifice of humble and grateful hearts? You may not only burnish your own armour, and find refreshment for your own spirit here, soldier of Christ, but here is a favoured spot on which to train recruits to join the sacramental hosts. You should pray in your family.

And in "praying always" you must of course pray in your closet. He who prays not in his closet,—are we not warranted in saying—prays not at all. This closet praying,—is it not that for which our Lord gives explicit directions, and of which we have the most illustrious examples in the history of our blessed Master, and of both the Old and New Testament saints? "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Such are the words of the Saviour. How did he, himself, continue all night in prayer, and rise a great while before day that he might go alone to wrestle with God; how did David call seven times a day on the Lord, and then again

through the long night-watches; how did Daniel kneel in his chamber three times a day, and pray and give thanks unto God, even though he knew that for so doing he must be cast into the den of lions. Calvin's breath stained the wall where he was accustomed to kneel, so much did he pray; John Welch kept a plaid upon his bed to wrap himself in when he arose in the night to pray; and when another man of God died, his knees were found indurated like the soles of his feet, because of his spending so much of his time in prayer.

These communings of the closet,—are they not like springs of cooling water to the soldier on his wearisome march through the arid desert of this sinful, sorrowful world? Sweet are the seasons in the sanctuary, the social meeting, and at the family altar; but sweeter still those, when, from the toils and strife of life, you pass away to where there are none but God and yourself,—where you can shut the door, and tell all the story even of griefs and conflicts that no other must know; and confess your short-comings, and wrestle for mercy,—pour out your tears and your full soul together, until, when coming away, you feel that your burden is gone, and your fears all removed, and as if you had been on the Mount and seen things which it would not be lawful to utter. Prayer in the closet is not only

essential to praying at all, but vital to the existence of piety.

And last of all, in order to pray "always" you must practise ejaculatory prayer. Dear as is the place where, retired from the world, you hold solitary communings with God, still there may and should be much of prayer in the intervals between your wrestlings in that privileged Bethel. Out in the din and strife of the world, where temptations from mankind, your business, the devil and sin, come in thick and powerful array,—that is no place for relaxing in prayer. The petitions of the closet may be heard and answered, indeed, in your safe-keeping when away from its walls; and he who most earnestly wrestles at the outset of the day that he may not be led into temptation, but be delivered from evil, will be most likely to find, when the evening has come, that the angel of the Lord has encamped round about him through the intervening time; but if he would walk steadfastly and safely, and come back victorious from his numberless skirmishes and heavy assaults, there must be other communications than those of the closet, between his Lord and his soul. Hence there must be prayer by ejaculation; and in case we had looked upon prayer as a weapon, we might have called prayers of ejaculation the small arms of the warfare.

Ejaculatory prayer requires not the sanctuary, the more retired circles, nor the closet, although in either it may and ought to be offered; but by the way-side, in the thronged streets, amidst the cares of commerce and trade, or in the social enjoyments of life, it is not only appropriate, but seems the only resort for keeping up close communication between the soul and heaven. A single wish of the inmost spirit, a groan unuttered, an unspoken sentence, a yearning of the heart directed to the throne above, may reach the ear of Him who never fails to guard his tried and tempted ones; and bring the blessing down just at the moment when that blessing is most needed. Under the sudden invasions of anger, envy, pride, lust, covetousness, revenge, despondency, let the heart go right up in an instant to your great Leader, and there shall come the needed help. Thus, by praying in the sanctuary, the social meeting, the domestic circle, and the closet, and ever sending up prayers of ejaculation, you will at least in a measure have fulfilled the apostolic injunction to pray "always with all prayer,"—you will not only have girded on the armour, met the enemy, and encountered the evil day, but you will also have imbibed the spirit for the warfare.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE SPIRIT FOR THE WARFARE.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

So important is the spirit of the warfare to the proper use of your armour, and the right issue of your conflicts, that yet a few other pages must be occupied with this theme.

In order rightly to pray, we must pray “in the Spirit,” or under the teachings and with the intercession of the third person of the ever-blessed Trinity. What the Spirit would teach us to pray for, or with what disposition we must call upon our great Captain for aid, we may learn from the Scriptures; but how he aids us by his direct operations on the soul, is not distinctly to be known by us here. “The



wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered." This divine agent suggests to our minds the things we need, and the times in which we need them; quickens our desires to have them; gives us the spirit of prayer, and then aids us directly with those mysterious groanings which cannot be uttered. If we would pray "in the Spirit," we must pray

With humility. Who ever heard of a proud, haughty beggar? Soldier as you are, you are still a beggar, and all the wisdom and strength you possess, is but the free and unmerited gift of a kind and merciful God. What have you that you have not received? your food and raiment,—your property, health, life, and reason; your nature renewed, and all spiritual graces;—have they not been bestowed by Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift? The prayers of the Scriptures are remarkable for their humility. Witness those of the patriarchs, of the prophets, of the psalmist; those of the publican, the dying thief and the prodigal;—how they all show the broken and the contrite heart.

God must be honoured, and self abased. "To this man will I look," saith the Lord; "even to him that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." No man who comes to the mercy-seat thanking God that he is not as other men, boasting of his good works and puffed up with self-sufficiency, can find acceptance there. No ear is open to hear such announcements of a righteousness which, after all, is but as filthy rags. No hand will be stretched out to help him who feels as if he had been an all-sufficient helper to himself. Like the poor Syro-Phœnician woman, you must come counting yourself happy if you may but eat the crumbs with the dogs; or take part with her whose highest aspiration seemed to be but to touch the hem of the Master's garment. Get down in the dust, Christian soldier. Fear not to bow your lofty crest nor to soil your armour; and learn from experience, that whilst the Captain of your Salvation bringeth down high looks, he also has pity upon and exalteth those that have humbled themselves.

Your praying must also be with an entire acquiescence in the will of your great Leader. Why should not God order all things according to his own will, as to the supply of your wants, and the general interests of his kingdom? Is he not wiser than we? Is he not better than we? Is he not the leader and proprietor of the militant hosts, whilst

we are but poor dependent soldiers in the ranks? Must the soldier not look to his captain for help? Is he warranted in dictating to his great superior just how, when, and where He shall help him? or in murmuring because the help does not come just as soon or just in the way he had expected?

“My ways are not your ways, neither are my thoughts your thoughts, saith the Lord.” “As far as the heaven is above the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. He sees further, takes in unspeakably more of the scope of things in their great bearings on the future of time and the greater future of eternity, than can his poor finite worms. He knows the disposition of him who seeks his help, and how far it may be best to withhold the blessing for a season, and thus try his faith; or allow him to feel something of the power of the adversary, that henceforth he may hate the tempter more, and henceforth more prize the help which can avail in an extremity so great. His promise may seem to tarry long, but it will not fail; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning; and though you do not know now why you are apparently so deserted, shut up in darkness, burdened down with crosses, and left to hard struggles

with the deadly assaults of the enemy ; yet you shall know hereafter, and know too that all was right, and all for the best.

It is not the way of him we follow, always to remove the sore evils we encounter. He often leaves us to struggle with them long ;—even to life's last hour to bear about us these hateful foes to our peace, ever waging the warfare, and after all just keeping the enemy at bay, without driving him utterly and forever from the field. Paul had a thorn in his flesh to fight with, and prayed hard for its removal. His prayer was answered, not by the extraction of the thorn, but by leaving it there, and then giving grace to blunt its sting and neutralize its poison.

Humiliating must it have been to Paul ever to bear this thorn about ; but that thorn was made his teacher, to give him lessons in humility ; to show him the constant necessity of grace to help him ; and thus at last to give him a better victory than if the special cause of grievance had been displaced. So it may be with you. Calling for help, that help may not come as you expect and desire it, but come it will, for praying breath was never spent in vain ; and come in a better way than you could have have dictated. God knows what is best for his poor tempted, sorrowing children ; and you may cast your cares upon him,

and then leave him to choose the method by which the victory shall be given.

Pray, too, with perseverance. If the call is not heard at once, let it be repeated; and still lift up the cry, for your Saviour loveth importunity. Witness the poor widow, who by her importunity prevailed even with an unjust judge;—how much more may you expect success, if equally importunate with him who is not only just, but merciful and full of tenderness, and who has bound himself by covenant obligations to afford mercy and grace in every time of need. Witness the case of him who went in the night season to his neighbour's house in search of bread, and was denied, because the neighbor with his children were in bed, and did not wish their rest disturbed; but who persevered in his appeals until the bed was forsaken, the door opened, and the bread given. "I waited patiently," or perseveringly, "for the Lord," says the Psalmist, "and he inclined unto me and heard my prayer." Occasional petitions, or petitions offered and not repeated, argue a meagre interest in the object asked for; perseverance and importunity imply deep concern, earnestness of soul, confidence in the power and willingness of God to hear and help;—and with such confidence God is honoured. Do not despair because the answer is delayed; but let this delay excite to louder,



longer, and more earnest calls, and rest assured that Israel's helper will be yours.

Faith is also an indispensable element in this calling upon God. He would have us "believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him." His infinite power and willingness; his boundless resources, which no giving can impoverish; his provisions for affording help; the illustrious examples of successful prayer he has put on sacred record, and his enjoining it as a duty as well as a privilege to seek his grace,—all these afford strong grounds on which to rest your faith in prayer. He has even condescended to argue with your unbelief in this respect, pointing you to the father who will not mock his child who asks him for bread or an egg, by giving him a stone or a serpent, and then putting to you the unanswerable interrogatory, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask him?" See how Elias prevailed by faith, when he prayed that it might not rain, and it did not; and when he prayed that it might rain, and lo, the refreshing showers came down. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Vigilance must also be coupled with praying, in order to pray always in the Spirit. "Praying always with all prayer

and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto," says the apostle. We must watch unto prayer. There must be sentinels in every army. Every soldier must be at times a sentinel; but in the great armies of salvation, every soldier must be a sentinel, and a sentinel always. Here there can be no rotation in this duty; no hours for rest are here allowed. The enemy knows no sleep nor weariness—neither must you, or you give him the advantage. Learn lessons of wisdom even from him. Watch his every movement; look for him even in the distance; when he seems reposing on his arms, keep your eye upon him; remembering the breaches he has made in former assaults, guard with the greater vigilance those weaker points; watch for opportunities for taking him at advantage, and in such seasons bestir yourself for vigorous and mighty onsets. Who that watches for opportunities for doing good will fail to find daily and hourly occasions for accomplishing something for his Master?—opportunities even amidst the toil of business, as well as in the more private intercourse of life, and the more strictly spiritual employments.

This watching furnishes the material for prayer. Watching against temptation, we call upon God at its approach; watching for occasions of usefulness, we lift up our hearts for help when those occasions come. The man of

trade watches the changes in commerce, that he may take advantage of them to enlarge his gains; the politician watches the ever-varying tide of public sentiment, that he may catch the rising floods, and ride upon them to the haven of human power and glory. Why should not you, in your great conflict with the powers of darkness, not only fight, and pray as you fight, but also, in like manner, “watch thereunto?”

In order to complete the spirit for the warfare, your praying must be with an enlarged benevolence. You must embrace within the scope of your supplications “all saints,” according to the instructions of the apostle; and as the following verse intimates, you must not fail to embrace among these the ministry.

The spirit of true piety is generous, expansive, benevolent. The blessings the believer receives for himself, he would also have imparted to others. He feels for his fellow-soldiers, enlisted against a common foe, exposed to the same wiles, oppressed with the same trials, encompassed with the same infirmities, and aiming at the same great and glorious end. “Is any among you afflicted,” said Paul, “so am I;” and so will every true follower say with regard to his companions in toil, the soldiers in the church militant. A brotherhood are they all; the triumph of one or the over-

throw of one, would be the triumph or the discomfiture of the common cause. How much this mutual sympathy and remembrance at the throne of grace, too, tends to suppress heart-burnings, jealousies, and self-seeking, and to make the whole body one harmonious, united mass! And as the ministry are, in some sense, file-leaders of the hosts, and their position demands peculiar wisdom, circumspection, consistency, and zeal, of how much importance is it that, when the cries go up for help, and "all saints" are remembered, these under-officers of the army should have a place in the prayers that are offered! A faithful, fearless, energetic ministry will, under God, make a faithful, fearless, energetic Church.

Wide is the field, then, which your callings upon God should embrace,—wide as the Church of God in every land, of every name. Wherever there is one who bears the impress of the cross, and fights under its wide-floating banner, whether he be in your own or another division of the hosts; whether doing battle amidst a countless throng, or single-handed and alone; whether in your immediate neighbourhood or far off in pagan lands,—he is enlisted in the same great cause with yourself; and has a right to share in your petitions for helping grace at the common mercy-seat. You must pray for "all saints."

Reader, you have now seen something of what the apostle means when he tells you, after giving you the armour, that you must pray “always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;” and if you have learned thus to pray, and are exercising yourself “without ceasing” in this means of communication with your glorious Head, you will not have buckled on the armour, nor met the enemy in vain; you will have learned how to use your weapons to foil the foe, and to push forward the conquests of salvation,—you will have imbibed the spirit for the warfare.

“O watch, and fight, and pray,  
 The battle ne'er give o'er;  
 Renew it boldly every day,  
 And help divine implore.

“Ne'er think the victory won,  
 Nor once at ease sit down;  
 Thy arduous work will not be done  
 Till thou hast got the crown.”



## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE VICTORY.

“The armour of God.”

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

“And having done all, to stand.”

FULL many a soldier who has marched to the field of battle with footsteps firm, cheek unblanched, and courage dauntless, has from that field returned no more. He has been baptized in his own blood, slain by the enemy, or else been borne away to long and hopeless captivity. Thus is it not with true soldiers in the army of the Lord. Maimed indeed they may be; partially driven back they may be; even carried for a season into captivity they may be; but utterly conquered or taken into hopeless bondage they shall never be. “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand,” says the glorious Leader of the hosts. Few and feeble may these hosts

sometimes seem to be ; down into the wilderness they may be driven ; but up from the wilderness they shall come triumphant, led by Him who holds the stars in his right-hand, and whose countenance is as the sun shining in his strength ; for it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom.

No wonder is it that the soldier of the cross comes through his battles a victor, when you remember whence his armour is derived, and in whom his strength lies. "The armour of God" is the appellation of the apostle ; and he who wears the panoply is to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Sincerity, righteousness, faith, readiness to every good word and work, the good hope, and the sword of the Spirit,—these are surely the work of no human artificer. From the hand of Him alone who fashioned the soul itself could such panoply as this have come. Would any mortal mind ever have conceived the scheme of a conflict of a weak worm with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places ; and the conquest of the worm over these principalities and powers, and over flesh and blood also ? If any mortal had conceived this glorious idea and achievement, could he have devised or executed such a panoply as this ?

No, soldier of the cross ; none other than He in the immeasurable depths of whose mind lie wisdom, power, and

goodness infinite, could have conceived the idea of this seemingly unequal contest, this triumph against all outward odds, and for it framed an instrumentality so perfect.

The very fact that God made the panoply, is itself, to him who wears it, a tower of strength. What this great artificer makes, he makes well. Why should we faint or fear; why should we for a moment waver, when we know that our armour is divine? The fact, too, that God has given it to us, is an earnest of victory. The panoply is for none but those whom he has called to be faithful soldiers. If he has given it to you, is there not reason in this very fact why, amidst all outward disadvantages, you should be firm and unwavering? Why should I feel dismayed by temptation, danger, affliction, the wrath of man, death itself, if I am arrayed in a suit of mail wrought by the fingers of the omnipotent Jehovah? "I wear the armour of God," may the Christian soldier say, "and, wearing it, may go fearlessly into the lions' den, or the seven times heated fiery furnace."

To my mind there is no greater tower of strength to the believer than is found in this one truth, "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord:" inclusive, of course, of the great method by which it is effected, through the work and righteousness of his beloved Son our Saviour. If our

safety in time of temptation and danger, our success in any good word and work, and especially our complete and final triumph over all enemies, rested in any measure on our own unaided strength, for one I should wish to abandon the hopeless contest, cast aside all armour, and cry evermore, "All these things are against me." Were salvation of myself, then, falling under the power of the tempter, and struggling amidst darkness and danger, how could I but become a prey to hopeless despair? Imperfections, unfaithfulness, sins,—all these have borne too large a part in the believer's personal experience for him to lean upon such a broken reed as self.

But when you take hold upon the fact that your salvation is of God, that he devised it all, providing alike the means and the end, and including it in the everlasting covenant made with his Son, how firm the ground on which you stand! What though, then, temptations, dangers, the wrath of man, or death itself shall come,—are these not a part of the reckonings in the covenant of Him who designs to save you? What though in yourself you are blind and weak and erring? Has not wisdom and strength and grace been provided especially because of such wants as these? What though flesh and blood, principalities and powers are arrayed against you? Were not all

these taken into the account when you were called from darkness into light, and their destruction provided for?

On this great rock did Paul stand when he spoke the sublime words, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things, to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Lofty language, indeed, is this. Breathing this spirit, where might we not go? what might we not encounter? Clad with the "armour of God," and "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," why should we not be able to stand in every evil day, and having done all, stand?

Hence is it true that he who wears the spiritual panoply goes forth safely and successfully. He has read that promise made to all thus equipped: "When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble." Or if, indeed, this blessed assurance



shall not be literally and constantly fulfilled to him, and if, amidst rough and slippery places, his feet are sometimes so entrapped that he loses his upright position, and seems almost hopelessly overthrown, yet he takes hold upon that other promise, which declares that "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord;" and that "the Lord delighteth in his way; so that, though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, because the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."

It is a circumstance worthy of remark, that no soldier who has been clad with this complete armour has ever been known to fall a hopeless and final victim to his enemies. He may have been beset with temptations sharp and strong; he may have stumbled "on the dark mountains," where his destruction seemed inevitable; and may, at times, have appeared to have gone utterly out of the way, and abandoned his march and his warfare; but if he has the genuine armour on, most certainly does he return to his fidelity again.

Those there have been, indeed, who, to all human appearance, had put on the panoply, and who, in the evil day, have not been able to stand. There ever have been, and perhaps ever will be, some who mistake a spurious armour for that of the gospel, and who, ere long, find that their panoply will not bear the test, and whose feet slide in due time. They are easily overcome and prostrated; and in

this helpless condition are taken captive by the enemy ; and are afterwards found fighting, perhaps, far more valiantly in his ranks than when mustered under the banner of salvation.

Such were there in the days of Christ. Attracted by his temporary popularity, and knowing nothing of the conflict to which his servants were called, they no sooner began to discover the true nature of his service, than "From that time many of them went back, and walked no more with him." Of all such, however, it might have been said, "They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us ; but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us."

But where the feet are shod with the sandals which come from the armory of God, those who fall shall rise again and renew the warfare.

Thus we see David, the man after God's own heart, in the evil day of temptation falling from his high estate into loathsomeness and guilt. But his fall was only for a season ; for the Captain of Salvation knew him as his servant, and came to the rescue, and raised him from his prostrate condition ; and with his iron-shod sandals he trod anew and with greater agility and determination the spiritual bat-

tle-field. Thus also Peter, who had averred with a confidence which knew no doubting, that though all men should forsake the Master, yet would not he,—this same Peter we see cast down in the mire of sin, and under the power of the evil one. But how soon again he rises from his fall, and stands erect and victorious over his foes; and with his armour girded afresh, and still more firm because of this fall, stands foremost in every enterprise, shunning no hardship nor danger, and counting not even his life dear unto him. Do we not here see that though the good man “fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;” and that “the righteous shall hold on his way?” “Having done all”—having put on the whole armour, and faithfully and perseveringly used all means of grace, “he stands” a victor.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## THE VICTORY.

“The armour of God.”

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

“And having done all, to stand.”

LET us now follow the soldier of the cross through his conflicts and his victories, and see how, with his armour on, he stands “in the evil day.”

His first great victory is won at the putting on of the panoply. All recruits for the armies of the Lord are won from the powers of darkness. All of them were once leagued with the enemy, faithfully doing his bidding, and making war against the powers of light. One such is at last arrested by the Spirit from on high, who is stronger than the strong man armed. He hears the summons, is shown the guiltiness and danger of the position he now

occupies; resolves to escape, but finds himself enthralled. Hard are his struggles against flesh, sin, and Satan; and apparently in vain. Fearfulness and trembling seize upon him; tears stream from his eyes; his bosom labours in deep agony; and he cries out, "Men and brethren, what shall I do?" What shall he do? Just then he hears those welcome words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "Look unto me and be ye saved." And look he does; and, looking, lives. To him that hung upon the cross he flies; and though Satan struggles hard to keep him, and doubts and fears beset the way, he finds the helper, and puts on the armour, drives back the enemy, and sings the song of victory. Just from the borders of despair, now on the verge of heaven, he "stands" a conqueror.

This, however, is but his first victory, for his old foes will still beset his way, striving ever to turn back his footsteps and impede his heavenward march; and amidst such trials he must remain steadfast. Not a few, indeed, prove all along more or less unstable, and do not excel. Their armour becomes rusted by contact with the world; the spirit of the warfare within them is feeble, and their course is far less successful than it should be. Steadfastness in



religion is indispensable to efficiency. The good soldier will stand in every evil day. Let us follow such an one

Into the evil day of temptation. Scarcely has his armour been girded on, when doubts and spiritual darkness assail him. The clear views of his Prince and Saviour are all gone; the songs of victory are silenced; his consciousness of safety has given place to fears and despondency. He knows not what manner of person he is. Once he had thought his mountain strong, firmly fixed, no more to move. Now he doubts whether all his joys and hopes had not been an empty dream. He has no pleasure in sitting beneath the droppings of the sanctuary; wandering thoughts distress him when he reads the sacred word; in prayer his spirit seems dead, cold, passionless. Former sins assert their claims; his imagination swarms with polluted things, and sin is mixed with all he does. He even hesitates whether he shall not renounce the cause he has so zealously espoused, and turn back again to his wallowing in the mire.

Long is the night and dreary; hard is the struggle, and to him apparently almost hopeless. But does he abandon the good cause and turn back to renew his friendship with his former allies? No; this he has no heart to do. Comfortless though the onward march must be, he can no

more look back. He will go forward, if he perish; and if he perish, will perish at the cross, and only there. Ah! tempted one, this is but one of the conflicts common to the soldiers of Christ; and he who called thee first, has not forgotten thee now. He hears thy cries; he pities thy weakness; and though for a season he seems to have forsaken thee, yet with his loving-kindness will he draw thee. "Though he slay me," cries the saint, "yet will I trust in him;" and He does not slay him, but with his outstretched arm lifts him from the miry clay, once more sets his feet upon the rock, and puts the new song again into his mouth. Long has been the night and dreary; but the shadows have now flown away; hard has been the struggle, but the adversary has been driven back; and through all the conflict the believer has been steadfast to his faith,—he has stood in the evil day.

The good soldier stands also in the day of spiritual declension, false doctrine, and opposition to evangelical piety. What matters it to him,—clad with faith, righteousness, truth, and ready obedience, buoyed up with the good hope and armed with the Spirit's sword,—that the outward prospects of Zion may not seem propitious? Does the fact that coldness pervades the hearts of most of God's people, relax his individual obligations to be faithful? Does it not

rather call upon him the more imperatively to be up and doing, because there are so many spiritual slumberers? Does the fact that Zion's progress is slow, and that iniquity abounds, or that his own prayers or labours seem attended with but little success, so dishearten him as to lead him to abandon his labours of love, restrain prayer, and doubt whether the kingdoms of this world ever shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ? or, rather, believing that it is his duty faithfully to use the means, leaving the result with God, in whose hands the Church is safe, and who can and will accomplish his purposes, so that even the gates of hell shall not prevail to destroy or permanently weaken the firm and glorious fabric of his Church, does he not still continue to pray, labour and trust—thus fulfilling the divine declaration, even in the midst of the greatest outward discouragements, that “the righteous shall hold on his way?”

Or if opposition, and even dreadful persecutions should arise, shall these fill him with dismay and drive him like a coward from the field? Does he not rather “consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners,” and consider also what far better saints than himself have been called to suffer for righteousness' sake, and determine “not to fear them that can kill the body, but rather to fear Him

that, having killed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell,"—counting it all honour that he may even be thought worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus? Truly, dear reader, such is the virtue of this heavenly armour, that through all the long winter of spiritual declension in Zion, amidst all apparent triumphs of the enemy, under all the obloquy and shame which the soldier may meet in the most fiery storms of battle, the faithful warrior is yet strong in the Lord; and having fearlessly and faithfully striven to do all, he stands in this evil day a victor still.

Or in the evil day of false doctrine, when men are forsaking the simple gospel truth for a spurious philosophy and a vain and empty ceremonial,—a religion which takes hold of the senses and not of the heart,—with his goodly armour on is he not still able to cling to the truth as it is in Jesus? Does he not bear in his inward experience a force of logic as to the efficacy and godlike power of the gospel on the soul, which more than refutes the sophistry of false philosophy and formalism, and puts to naught the wisdom of men, and enables him as a victor still to stand?

Or when the dark day of sorrow and bereavement comes, and such shafts penetrate his soul, as cause a keenness of anguish which for the present no earthly balm can heal, does he faint, or stand in wicked rebellion? His poor

smitten, bleeding heart may indeed tempt him to sit in sullen despair, refusing longer to serve a Master who deals thus hardly with him, or to ask, in proud rebellion, Why hast thou thus afflicted me?—but such are only a part of his conflicts: against such wickedness he wrestles hard; and the shield of faith is buckled closer, and the helmet of hope bound on more firmly, and the sword of the word used more vigorously, until he comes out of the fires purified rather than destroyed.

The object of his affliction was perhaps a dearly loved child, about whom his tenderest affections had been twined, now laid on the bed of sickness. Through weary days and sleepless nights he has watched about that couch, praying God, if it might be his good pleasure, to spare the much-prized treasure of his heart. But it was not God's good pleasure to grant that prayer. The stroke at last fell with mountain weight,—a weight which seemed as if it might have crushed, but only stunned him. He stood like a thing of stone; his eyes were tearless; his heart like adamant; fierce defiance and deep thunders of rebellion struggled away down in his inmost bosom. The evil one seemed almost to have conquered. But at last his better nature began to revive, and faith and hope prevailed. He thought of the mysteriousness by which God works out his purposes



of love ; of the strange methods by which he turns streams of sorrow to fountains of joy ; of the good he had received from the hands of Him of whom he is now complaining that he has received one instalment of seeming evil. The sealed fountains are at last broken up ; his tears fall like rain ; his stony heart melts down before the promises and the cross ; and in gentleness he sinks into the sweet repose of quiet, un murmuring resignation, as from his lips fall the blessed words, "It is the Lord, let him do as to him seemeth best." "I know that thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." With the shield of faith and the sword of the word, he has warded off the fiery darts of the devil, and through all this evil day has stood a conqueror.

And in the evil day of death, also, the Christian soldier is a conqueror. Yes ! "it is appointed unto all men once to die." You must at last descend into the dark valley, and meet the gloomy monster, death. He may come upon you, too, with a desperation which will seem to mark a determination to make you his victim ; and the conflict may be hard and long ; but, armed with the gospel panoply, you shall win the day. Your death-bed is your last battle-field,—the field, too, where you shall so gain the victory that death shall seem death no more. Such shall be the

triumphs of faith and hope, and the calmness of your spirit; such shall be the efficacy of the breastplate and the sword in dispelling all doubts and fears, that you shall be able to gird on your sandals and walk down into the portals of death, as if entering the house of a friend. Weeping watchers around your couch may hear you say, in peaceful surprise, Can this be death? "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus does the Christian soldier pass through this last evil day; and, strong in the Lord and the power of his might, in glorious triumph over death itself "he stands" a conqueror.

As with the individual soldier, so also with the collective hosts: the great army of the Church militant shall yet come off conquerors over the powers of darkness here on earth, and at last shout the victory home as they go up to their everlasting scenes of triumph. Long has the Church of God on earth been a feeble, scattered flock; long have they prayed, wept, and toiled for the pulling down of Satan's strongholds, and the universal reign of the Prince of Peace; long have the watchmen on the wide-stretched walls been crying one to another, Watchman, what of the night? and long has the morning seemed in coming. But the morning shall come; Satan's power shall be destroyed;

Jesus Christ shall “see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied;” “the heathen shall be given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” The hosts of the Church militant shall in future time be greatly multiplied; their panoplied ranks shall stand on every shore, and include every tribe and nation, until at length there shall be one solid column of soldiery throwing its bright circle round the globe. Then shall be heard shouted from their ranks, “Hallelujah! The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”

And when this scene of human things is ended; when the great purposes for which this portion of creation was called into being are all fulfilled; when this planet shall be swept of its tenantry and wrapt in a mantle of fire, and the “works of the devil” all destroyed; how glorious will be the spectacle to him who is privileged to look within the portals of the kingdom above!

In Rome, the ancient mistress of the world, how glorious was that day when, through her arched gates, came back from conquest her victorious armies, with banners flying, trumpets sounding, shouts of triumph swelling high, and the long columns pouring their panoplied legions, loaded with spoils, through her streets!—this I say was a glorious day for “the mistress of the world.” But who shall tell

the glory of that day when the Captain of Salvation shall bring home his entire blood-washed army from its last battles; when there shall come into the portals of the upper skies the serried hosts of Christian soldiery, with helmets gleaming; palms waving high; songs of immortal victory swelling up; the crimson banner of the cross floating far and wide above them, and the almost endless columns pouring into the eternal city! Will not this be a glorious day in the Zion of our God? Shall not all heaven be vocal with the loudest, richest anthem, as the Captain of Salvation draws up in magnificent array his splendid hosts, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," and, presenting them before his Father, says, "Here, Lord, am I, and those whom thou hast given me!" These are at once my soldiers and my trophies!

The panoply will then have served its purpose; Sin, Satan, and every other foe will have been trodden under foot forever; and upon the high hills of heaven, beside its crystal streams of life, and under its nightless, stormless skies, the victorious soldiery will "learn war no more," but rest in undisturbed, eternal tranquility.

"I ask them, whence their victory came;  
They, with united breath,  
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,  
Their triumph to his death."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## THE CALL TO ARMS.

“Put on the whole armour of God.”

READER! would you share this glorious victory of the saints? then with the saints must you “fight the good fight of faith,” and obey the apostle’s injunction to “put on the whole armour of God.”

Have you already put the armour on? I ask not whether your name is found on the registers of the visible army, or whether you wear the outward garb of a Christian soldier;—many there have been, in almost every army, whose names were on the rolls, and who were marshalled in the ranks, who were after all but traitors,—enemies in disguise. So is it in the visible Church of God. “Not every one,” says Christ, “who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God; but he that doeth



the will of my Father which is in heaven.” “Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” to whom he shall say, “I never knew you. Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.” Have you put on the armour? Upon careful, honest, prayerful scrutiny, is there good reason to believe that you have a sincere, truthful desire from a regenerate heart to do God’s holy will; an humble, simple faith in Christ; a holiness of heart and righteousness of life; a readiness to practise and propagate by every good word and work the gospel of peace; a good hope through grace of everlasting life; and a constant and faithful use of the word of God for your own sanctification, for the overthrow of error and the diffusion of truth? and are you humbly striving to use this armour, calling all the while for help on God your Saviour, and thus standing unmovable in every evil day? If so, you are indeed a good soldier, and need not be ashamed or afraid. Your conflicts may be hard, and the evil day may seem long, but your weakness shall be made strength. Deliverance will in due season come, and you shall at last lay hold on eternal life. Keep your armour bright; put not on a part of it, but “the whole,” and keep up a constant and close communication

between yourself and the Captain of your salvation, by “always calling upon God.”

“Prayer makes the Christian’s armour bright.”

If, however, reader, on faithful scrutiny you have reason to believe the armour of God is not yours, then be persuaded at once to put it on. This can be done by giving up the world; confessing and turning from your sins; ceasing to do evil and learning to do well; by coming, as a poor helpless captive, to the cross of Jesus Christ, and there laying down your arms of rebellion, and casting yourself unreservedly on him for mercy. Ready is this gracious Prince and Saviour to pardon and receive the bitterest foe who will but return and sorrowing seek his face. Able and willing is he, by his Holy Spirit, to subdue your rebellion, impart to you principles of new obedience, and put upon your naked soul “the whole panoply of God.” “Let him that heareth say come; and whosoever will, let him come,” are his kind words of invitation; and “him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,” is the gracious assurance which he gives you. Will you not seek his grace to help you come at once? Wait not longer for “a more convenient season.” “Behold, now is the accepted time.” Lay down the arms of your rebellion, and with

Thomas say, "My Lord and my God!" Like Moses, choose rather to "suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

The pleasures of Satan's kingdom are indeed but "for a season." Soon they will all pass away; soon for you all earthly things will pass away; and the day of life, which, if you have continued still "a servant of sin" and Satan, will have proved emphatically an evil day, will also soon be gone, and be succeeded by the inevitable hour of death, which will then be to you an "evil day" indeed. O reader! if, when that dreadful conflict with the last monster comes, you have not the armour on, what will you do,—whither will you flee? In that sad struggle death will surely be the victor. However you may "start and shrink and fear to launch away," you must go; for he will claim you as his own with a power you will be utterly unable to resist. Death, too, having made you his captive, will hand you over to his ally, Hell; and in bondage to Satan, amidst lost spirits and devils damned, fallen in a hopeless overthrow, you will be shut up under the full power of sin and Satan in the dark house of eternal captivity.

How much better that you should get the victory over the great adversary, than that he should get this eternal victory over you! No alternative is left you. You must

either enlist under the banner of the cross, fight the good fight, and through grace come off conqueror over sin and Satan, or you must still remain in bondage to the devil, and at last be driven away in your wickedness.

Take warning, then, in time, and seek the better part. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

THE END.





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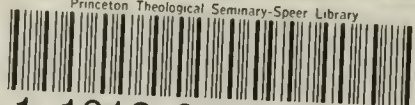
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